

Franklin Oliver
Pioneer Settler of Livingston County, Illinois

by

Dale C. Maley

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Franklin Oliver: Pioneer Settler of
Livingston County, Illinois

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Table of Contents

[Chapter 1](#)

Book Design

[Chapter 2](#)

1682 to 1800

[Chapter 3](#)

1801 to 1817

[Chapter 4](#)

1818

[Chapter 5](#)

1819 to 1831

[Chapter 6](#)

1832

[Chapter 7](#)

1835

[Chapter 8](#)

1836

[Chapter 9](#)

1837

[Chapter 10](#)

1848

[Chapter 11](#)

1850

Chapter 12

1851

Chapter 13

1856

Chapter 14

1858

Chapter 15

1816

Chapter 16

1865

Chapter 17

1867

Chapter 18

1875

Chapter 19

1876

Chapter 20

1877

Chapter 21

1878

Chapter 22

1879

Chapter 23

1880

Chapter 24

1881

Chapter 25

1892

Chapter 26

1892

Chapter 27

1900

Chapter 28

1911

Chapter 29

1919

Chapter 30

1933

Chapter 31

1947

Chapter 32

1964

Chapter 33

1969

Chapter 34

2005-2009

Chapter 35

Unsolved Franklin Oliver Mysteries

Chapter 36

Conclusion

References

Recommended Reading

Websites

Other Sources of Information

Author Spotlight

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Edition Number

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Foreword

John A. Oliver (1733-1824) lived in Bordentown, New Jersey. He became friends with Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790). John Oliver served as a quartermaster in the Revolutionary War.

Bordentown citizen Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791) was a patriot and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Hopkinson had artistic talents and helped design the first U.S. flag, wrote music, wrote poetry, sketched, and painted. Hopkinson painted a portrait of Benjamin Franklin. Mr. Franklin then gave the picture to his friend, John Oliver. Eventually, Franklin Oliver (1797-1881) inherited the portrait from his father.

Franklin Oliver grew up in Bordentown and served as a Private in the War of 1812. He then worked for Joseph Bonaparte, older brother of Napoleon Bonaparte, when he built his estate in Bordentown. Franklin Oliver learned the craft of surveying.

In 1832, Franklin Oliver became one of the pioneer settlers of Livingston County, Illinois. He surveyed new towns and selected some of the best lands to purchase. As a result, he accumulated over 4,000 acres of land in Livingston and Ford Counties.

Franklin Oliver was married three times and had nine children. He lived a very colorful life in Illinois. This book documents the interesting pioneering life of Franklin Oliver. It is hoped this book will help people understand the critical role that Franklin Oliver played in early Illinois history.

Acknowledgments

Thanks go to Derrick Babbs for providing the image of Franklin Oliver used on the front cover of the book.

The Fairbury Echoes Museum graciously provided access to historical reference materials including archived Fairbury Blade newspapers.

Thanks go to David Hornickel for providing information and suggesting improvements to the content of the book.

Thanks to the Chatsworth Library. Several of the photographs in the libraries collection were utilized in this book.

Many thanks go to Judith K. Wells for proofreading the manuscript.

CHAPTER 1

Book Design

There are four primary historical reference books used whenever research is performed about Livingston County, Illinois.

1878 History Book

The earliest published reference to Livingston County, Illinois history is William Le Baron's 1878 book titled ***The History of Livingston County, Illinois***. This book will be called the 1878 history book in future references.

1888 History Book

The 1888 history book titled ***Portrait and Biographical Album of Livingston County*** by Chapman Brothers is the second Livingston County history book. This book will be called the 1888 history book in future references.

1900 History Book

The 1900 history book titled ***The Biographical Record of Livingston and Woodford Counties*** by S. J. Clarke is the third Livingston County history book.

1909 History Book

The 1909 history book titled *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Livingston County* by Bateman and Selby is the fourth Livingston County history book. This book will be called the 1909 history book in future references.

When William Le Baron wrote the 1878 history book, he had the luxury of interviewing Franklin Oliver (1797-1881). In 1878, Franklin Oliver was 81 years old. However, Le Baron noted in his book that Mr. Oliver still retained his mental faculties. Because Franklin Oliver was still alive, this book contains much information about Franklin Oliver and his home at Oliver's Crossing.

Ford County History Books

The 1884 history book is titled the *Historical Atlas of Ford County, Illinois*, and was written by J. H. Beers.

Other Ford County history books were reviewed, but they had no information about Franklin Oliver.

Chatsworth Library

The library has a packet of information donated by the Oliver family. The library uses this information to set up periodic displays of Franklin Oliver. Copies of several photographs were utilized for this book.

Other Important Historical Sources

The Chatsworth Plaindealer Newspaper has been digitized and is available for free on the Chatsworth Library website. Unfortunately, it is not directly word-searchable. However, one can word search it using Google's search engine in the format of "***Franklin Oliver***" ***site: chatsworthlibraryarchives.org***.

The Fairbury Blade has now been digitized and is word searchable back to 1871. Access to the Blade archives is free and available from the Dominy Memorial Library website. There were also other newspapers published in Fairbury between its founding in 1857 and 1871. Unfortunately, no copies of these early newspapers exist.

Unfortunately, the Pontiac Daily Leader has not yet been digitized. The Leader likely has articles about the Franklin Oliver family. Hopefully, the Leader will get digitized, and researchers will be able to search for new material about the Franklin Oliver family easily.

In 1967, Alma Lewis James published the first edition of her book titled ***Stuffed Clubs and Antimacassars: Accounts and tales of early Fairbury, Illinois***. Alma Lewis James was a Fairbury historian. She also published a revised edition of her book in 1977. Copies of her second edition are still available from the Echoes Museum in Fairbury, Illinois. Her 1967 edition has a complete chapter dedicated to Franklin Oliver. Her 1977 second edition has slightly less Franklin Oliver material than the first edition.

The Bloomington Pantagraph newspaper archives are also available online and can be searched back to 1838. There is an annual subscription fee required to access these archives.

Newspapers.com and GenealogyBank.com are two websites that contain archives of thousands of newspapers. Annual subscription fees are required to access these archives.

Google Books was an invaluable source for old books with information about Franklin Oliver and his father. NOTE: You must utilize the Google Book option to find these books. The regular Google search feature does not readily identify these old publications.

All available online sources relating to the Oliver family in Bordentown, New Jersey, were reviewed. There is likely more information about the Oliver family in sources at Bordentown, which have not yet been scanned and made available on the Internet. Bordentown even has a street named Oliver Street. A physical trip to Bordentown to review all available documents would probably yield more information about the family.

Citations

If possible, references and dates will be noted for all materials used in this book. In the event no date is available, that fact will be noted.

Newspaper Stories

All newspaper stories cited in this book will be presented in the original wording of the article. If the copy of the article had adequate quality, it may be shown as an image. If the article is of poor visual quality, it will be transcribed into text.

Chronological Chapters

This book is designed in chronological order to make it easier to follow the story of the Oliver family.

Rumors and Tales

In writing previous history books, the author only published information found from written sources.

In the case of Franklin Oliver, one existing book and several newspaper articles tell of several rumors and tales about Franklin Oliver. The Oliver family also recounted several family stories to book authors or newspaper reporters. This information will be carefully reviewed for historical accuracy. If no evidence is found to support these stories, this conclusion will be so noted.

CHAPTER 2

1682 to 1800

Bordentown, New Jersey

The City of Bordentown is a square mile enclave tucked onto the bluffs of the Delaware River approximately 45 miles upstream from Philadelphia. With New York 75 miles to the North, it is understandable that this small city became a colonial transportation hub.

The City started its existence in 1682 with a log cabin on the riverbank and the name Farnsworth Landing. Settled by Thomas Farnsworth, an English Quaker, the town was a trading point in Colonial America.

In 1717, Joseph Borden settled there and bought up a substantial part of the land. He changed the town's name to Borden's Towne.

By 1740, he started a packet line from Philadelphia to Bordentown. A packet line was vessels that traveled between two places at scheduled times each day. Travelers would stop and rest in Borden's Towne and then board the Borden Stage for Perth Amboy where they would make their ferry boat connections to New York. Most of the founding fathers of the new republic passed through Bordentown which had become a bustling city of colonial trade.

Bordentown's crossroads importance was not lost even to the British. The town was occupied by the British forces on three separate occasions from 1777 through 1778. During one of those occupations much of the town was burned in retaliation of Revolutionary activities including "The Battle of the Kegs". The

kegs were primitive torpedoes built in Bordentown, fashioned with a triggering mechanism by Mr. Miles at his gun shop on the corner of Farnsworth Avenue and Miles Alley. The kegs were launched from large row boats just south of Bordentown, floating down to the Philadelphia harbor, then a British stronghold, on the swift outgoing tide. Although no major British war ships were destroyed, the explosions created so much commotion in the harbor the British spent much of the night shooting at nothing, creating an embarrassing event exacerbated by a drinking song, penned by Francis Hopkinson, poking fun at the scared British and sung in taverns all over the region.

The Town's historical significance did not end with the colonial period as Bordentown in the mid 1800's continued to play a major role in transportation. The first movement by a steam engine on rails in this country occurred on the outskirts of town by the famous steam engine the "John Bull" (now a permanent part of the collection at the Smithsonian). Bordentown was an important stop on the railroad line between Philadelphia and New York.... a boom time for Bordentown with hotels, inns and merchants catering to the travelers and the trade they attracted. American Presidents and notables passed through the town, some stayed.

Joseph Bonaparte, elder brother of Napoleon and exiled King of Spain and Naples, was one of those notables that stayed. In 1816, pleased by the river's beauty, the convenient location to cultural centers and the abundance of unspoiled property, Joseph Bonaparte purchased large tracts of land from Stephen Sayre and built his mansion in Bordentown on the bluffs overlooking the Delaware River Valley. Bonaparte brought a European influence to the town spending more than 20 years there. While residing in Bordentown he

hosted many important people and was offered the throne of Mexico but turned it down over his preference for a country gentleman's lifestyle.

Location of Bordertown



The population of Bordertown was 3,924 in the 2010 Census.

Most Famous Residents of Bordentown

One of the most famous residents of Bordentown was Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791), an author and composer. He designed Continental paper money, the first United States coin, and two early versions of the American flag, one for the United States and one for the United States Navy. Francis was the first native American composer of a secular song in 1759. He was also one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence in July 1776, as a delegate from New Jersey. He served in various roles in the early United States government including as a member of the Second Continental Congress and as a member of the Navy Board. He later became the first federal judge of the Eastern District Court of Pennsylvania on September 30, 1789.

Both Francis Hopkinson and his father Thomas Hopkinson were very close friends with Benjamin Franklin. Francis Hopkinson was also good friends with George Washington. Francis hoped the nation's first president would appoint him as the chief court musician, but such an aristocratic position was not to materialize within the new experiment in nationhood, the United States.

Examples survive today of Mr. Hopkinson's writings, some of the music he composed, and poetry he wrote. He also made sketches of the United States flag and the Great Seal of Delaware. There are various mentions of Francis Hopkinson also doing sketching and painting. Besides the sketches of the flag and the Great Seal of Delaware, no other examples of his sketches or paintings could be found to exist today.

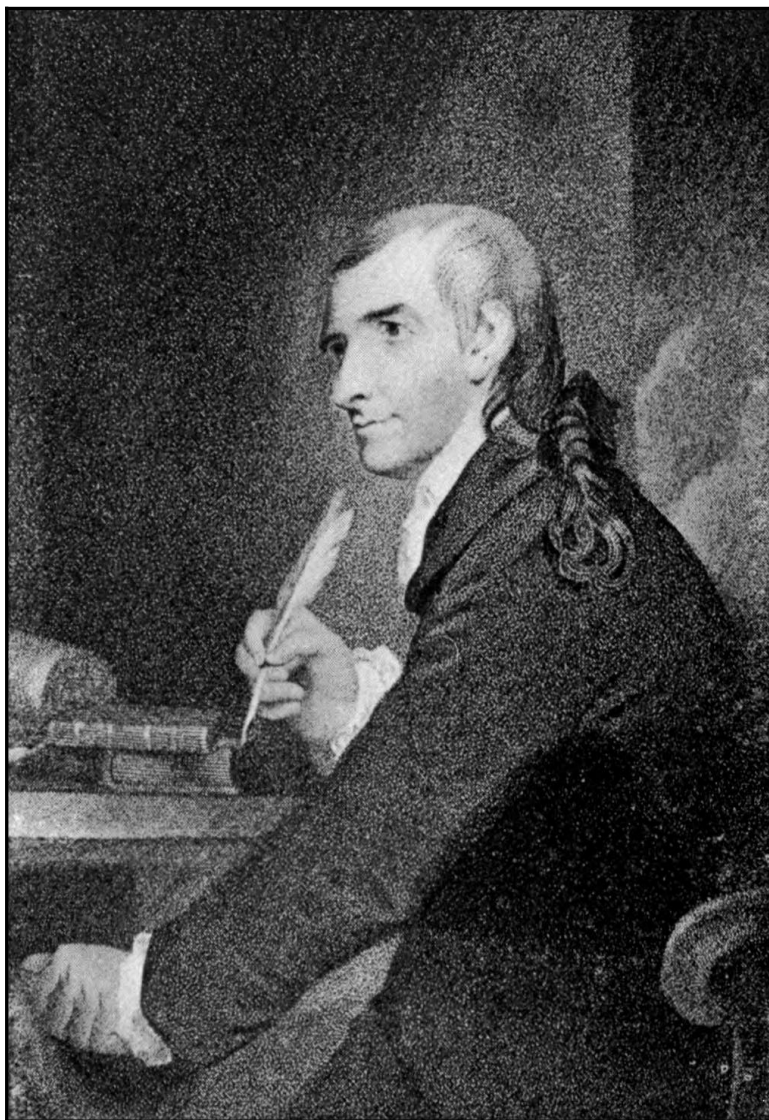
In 1919, the University of Pennsylvania published the June 6, 1919, issue of *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. In that publication was a feature story about Francis Hopkins, the university's first student. An excerpt of that article is shown below:

leaders of American thought in the eighteenth century. A poet, a musician, an essayist; a statesman, a jurist, a painter and a dramatist, Francis Hopkinson may rank even with the many-sided Franklin in the many phases of his creative activity. His poetry has a quality rare in this country before 1800, and his essays are of even greater literary value and had far more political effect. As a witness to his ability as a painter, there hangs in the halls of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania his portrait painted by himself after the original by Robert Pine, while his priority in this country as a musical composer is emphasized by this occasion tonight.

This article recounted that Francis Hopkinson painted a self-portrait that in 1919 was hanging at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This is evidence that Hopkinson was capable of painting a portrait of Benjamin Franklin.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania was contacted to determine if the self-portrait still exists today. A researcher at the Historical Society replied to the inquiry and the response is shown below.

Unfortunately, the majority of the paintings that were at HSP have left some years ago. They were transferred to the Atwater Kent Museum, which has since closed. I am not sure if the collection was broken up and sold off, or they are still in storage somewhere in the City. Also, I do not have any contact information at this time, or else I would investigate further for you.



Francis Hopkinson

Another famous resident of Bordentown was Joseph Bonaparte. He was the older brother of Napoleon Bonaparte. Wikipedia has a good summary of Napoleon Bonaparte's life.

Napoleon Bonaparte (15 August 1769 – 5 May 1821) was a French military and political leader of Corsican descent. He rose to prominence during the French Revolution and led several successful campaigns during the Revolutionary Wars. As **Napoleon I**, he was Emperor of the French from 1804 until 1814, and again in 1815.

Napoleon dominated European and global affairs for more than a decade while leading France against a series of coalitions in the Napoleonic Wars. He won most of these wars and the vast majority of his battles, building a large empire that ruled over continental Europe before its final collapse in 1815. One of the greatest commanders in history, his wars and campaigns are studied at military schools worldwide. He remains one of the most celebrated and controversial political figures in human history.

Napoleon had an extensive and powerful impact on the modern world, bringing liberal reforms to the numerous territories that he conquered and controlled, especially the Low Countries, Switzerland, and large parts of modern Italy and Germany. He implemented fundamental liberal policies in France and throughout Western Europe.

His lasting legal achievement, the Napoleonic Code, has been highly influential. Roberts says, "The ideas that underpin our modern world—meritocracy, equality before the law, property rights, religious toleration, modern secular education, sound finances, and so on—

were championed, consolidated, codified and geographically extended by Napoleon. To them he added a rational and efficient local administration, an end to rural banditry, the encouragement of science and the arts, the abolition of feudalism and the greatest codification of laws since the fall of the Roman Empire.

When Napoleon Bonaparte was in power, he appointed his older brother Joseph Bonaparte to various political and military positions. The last position that Joseph Bonaparte held before Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated was the King of Spain.

When Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated and sent to the island of Elba, Joseph Bonaparte had to leave Spain. Joseph decided to move to Bordentown, New Jersey.

Wikipedia details the years that Joseph Bonaparte spent in Bordentown.

In the period 1817–1832, Bonaparte lived primarily in the United States (where he sold the jewels he had taken from Spain). He first settled in New York City and Philadelphia, where his house became the centre of activity for French expatriates. In 1823, he was elected as a member to the American Philosophical Society.

Later he purchased an estate, called Point Breeze and formerly owned by Stephen Sayre. It was in Bordentown, New Jersey, on the east side of the Delaware River. It was located near the confluence of Crosswicks Creek and the Delaware. He considerably expanded Sayre's home and created extensive gardens in the picturesque style.

When his first home was destroyed by fire in January 1820 he converted his stables into a second grand house. On completion, it was generally viewed—perhaps diplomatically – as the “second-finest house in America” after the White House. At Point Breeze, Bonaparte entertained many of the leading intellectuals and politicians of his day.



Joseph Bonaparte

Another Patriot Calls Bordentown Home

Thomas Paine (1736-1809) owned a home at the corner of Farnsworth and Church Streets in Bordentown. Paine is most famous for his pamphlet titled *Common Sense* that advocated for the colonies separating from England.



Birth of Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was born in 1705 in Boston. He was one of our most famous founding fathers and his portrait is on our \$100 bills. Wikipedia summarizes the life of one of our most famous patriots.

Benjamin Franklin was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. A polymath, he was a leading writer, printer, political philosopher, politician, Freemason, postmaster, scientist, inventor, humorist, civic activist, statesman, and diplomat.

As a scientist, he was a major figure in the American Enlightenment and the history of physics for his discoveries and theories regarding electricity. As an inventor, he is known for the lightning rod, bifocals, and the Franklin stove, among other inventions.

He founded many civic organizations, including the Library Company, Philadelphia's first fire department, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Franklin earned the title of "The First American" for his early and indefatigable campaigning for colonial unity, initially as an author and spokesman in London for several colonies. As the first United States ambassador to France, he exemplified the emerging American nation. Franklin was foundational in defining the American ethos as a marriage of the practical values of thrift, hard work, education, community spirit, self-governing institutions, and opposition to authoritarianism both political and religious, with the scientific and tolerant values of the Enlightenment.

In the words of historian Henry Steele Commager, "In Franklin could be merged the virtues of Puritanism without its defects, the illumination of the Enlightenment without its heat." To Walter Isaacson, this makes Franklin "the most accomplished American of his age and the most influential in inventing the type of society America would become."

Franklin became a successful newspaper editor and printer in Philadelphia, the leading city in the colonies, publishing the *Pennsylvania Gazette* at the age of 23.

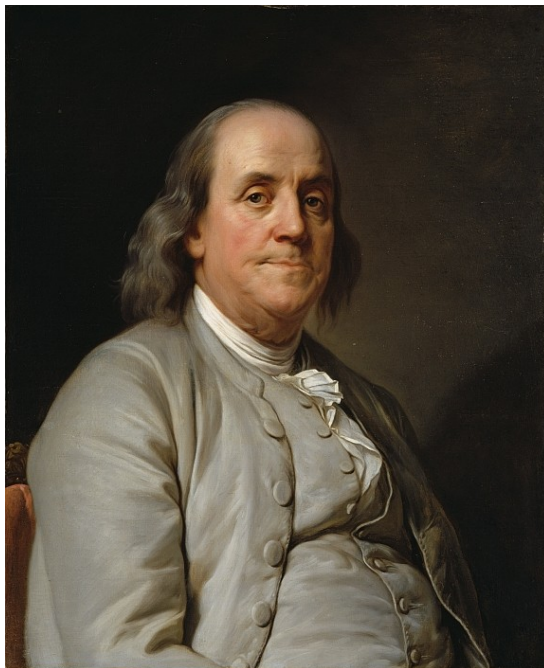
He became wealthy publishing the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which he authored under the pseudonym "Richard Saunders". After 1767, he was associated with the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, a newspaper that was known for its revolutionary sentiments and criticisms of the policies of the British Parliament and the Crown.

He pioneered and was the first president of Academy and College of Philadelphia which opened in 1751 and later became the University of Pennsylvania. He organized and was the first secretary of the American Philosophical Society and was elected president in 1769. Franklin became a national hero in America as an agent for several colonies when he spearheaded an effort in London to have the Parliament of Great Britain repeal the unpopular Stamp Act. An accomplished diplomat, he was widely admired among the French as American minister to Paris and was a major figure in the development of positive Franco-American relations. His efforts proved vital for the American Revolution in securing shipments of crucial munitions from France. He was promoted to deputy postmaster-general for the British colonies on August 10, 1753, having been Philadelphia postmaster for many years, and this enabled him to set up the first national communications network. During the revolution, he became the first

United States Postmaster General. He was active in community affairs and colonial and state politics, as well as national and international affairs. From 1785 to 1788, he served as governor of Pennsylvania.

He initially owned and dealt in slaves but, by the late 1750s, he began arguing against slavery, became an abolitionist, and promoted education and the integration of blacks in American Society.

His life and legacy of scientific and political achievement, and his status as one of America's most influential Founding Fathers, have seen Franklin honored more than two centuries after his death on the fifty-cent piece, the \$100 bill, warships, and the names of many towns, counties, educational institutions, and corporations, as well as numerous cultural references and with a portrait in the Oval Office.



Birth of John Oliver

John A. Oliver born in Ireland in 1733. No official document could be found verifying the date or place of birth.

Birth of Francis Hopkinson

Francis Hopkinson, signer of the Declaration of Independence, was born in 1737 in Philadelphia. He lived most of his life in Bordentown, New Jersey.

Birth of Joseph Bonaparte

The brother of Napoleon Bonaparte was born in 1768 in Corsica. He lived about 20 years in Bordentown, New Jersey.

Marriage of John Oliver

In 1771, at the age of 38, John Oliver married Mary Elizabeth Carman (1755-1820). Mary was 16 years of age when she married John Oliver.

New Jersey, U.S., Marriage Records, 1670-1965

[View Record](#)

Name Mary Carman

Gender Female

Marriage Date 24 Apr 1771

Marriage Place Monmouth, New Jersey, USA

Spouse John Oliver

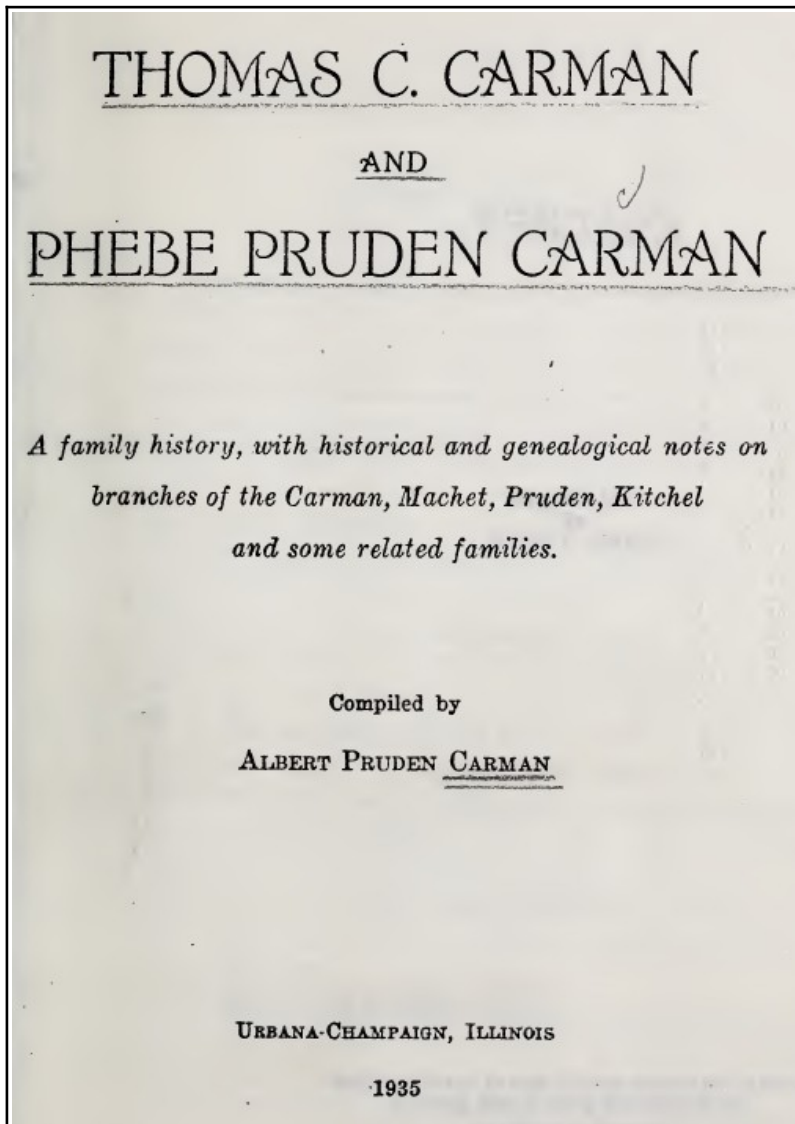
Film Number 000802940

John and Mary Oliver had 11 children per Ancestry.com.

Elizabeth Oliver	1772-1845
Robert Oliver	1773-1831
John Oliver	1774-unknown
James Oliver	1776-1830
Washington Oliver	1778-1868
Mary Oliver	1783-1854
Margaret Oliver	1785-1860
Franklin Benjamin Oliver	1787-1881
Thomas P. Oliver	1789-1859
Ann Oliver	1790-1849
Rebecca Oliver	1794-1824

Carman Family Genealogy

The 1935 book titled *Thomas C. Carman and Phebe Pruden Carman* by Albert Pruden Carman traces the history of this family back to Europe.



One portion of the book was actually compiled in 1881, the same year that Franklin Oliver died. This section is show below.

XVIII Mary (6).

XIX Thomas (6).

JOSHUA (5) CARMAN, VI, b. about 1749; d. at Bordentown 1838; m. Hannah Herbert; had one child who d. young.

BENJAMIN (5) CARMAN, VII, b. Bordentown 1751; had one son who emigrated to the West.

ELIZABETH (5) CARMAN, VIII, b. at Bordentown 1752; m. first, William Steward; m. second, William Wright; children: Daniel Steward, William Steward.

MARY (5) CARMAN, IX, b. 1755; d. at Bordentown June 30, 1820; m. John Oliver; children: Elizabeth (1772-1845), m. Joseph Carman, XII; Robert (1773-1831); John (b. 1774); James (b. 1776); Washington (b. 1778); Mary (1783-1854); Margaret (1785-1860); Franklin (b. 1787, living 1881); Thomas P. (1789-1859); Ann (1790-1869); Rebecca (1794-1824).

This book can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/4ufzzeu2>.

The American Revolutionary War

The beginnings of this war trace back to when the first fighting broke out on April 19, 1775 when the British army stationed at Boston was harassed by the Massachusetts militia at Lexington and Concord after destroying colonial Assembly powder stores.

John Oliver was 42 years of age, married, with three children when the first fighting started in 1775. John served as a quartermaster in the Revolutionary War.

The 1900 Livingston County history book is one source for his service in the Revolutionary War. A second source is that his name is included on the list of soldiers on the Bordentown War Memorial Wall at Farnsworth Ave. and Railroad Ave. This memorial is documented on the web site at <https://tinyurl.com/yckjht2p>.

A third reference to John Oliver's service in the Revolutionary War is the 1883 book titled *History of Burlington and Mercer Counties, New Jersey, with Biographical Sketches of Many of the Their Prominent Pioneers and Prominent men.*

In this book, on page 35, there is a list of four Quartermasters.

QUARTERMASTERS.	
Borden, Joseph.	Hoagland, Oaky.
Borden, Joseph, Jr.	Oliver, John.

It is interesting to note that Joseph Borden, the founder of Bordentown, was also a Quartermaster in the Revolutionary War. This book has descriptions of Revolutionary War battles fought in the Burlington County area (which includes Bordentown).

HISTORY
OF
BURLINGTON AND MERCER
COUNTIES,
NEW JERSEY,
WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF MANY OF THEIR
PIONEERS AND PROMINENT MEN.

BY
MAJOR E. M. WOODWARD
AND
JOHN F. HAGEMAN.

ILLUSTRATED.

PHILADELPHIA:
EVERTS & PECK.
1883.

PRESS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO., PHILADELPHIA.

This book may be accessed at Archive.org at
<https://tinyurl.com/75rv9p63>.

Signing of Declaration of Independence

On the 4th of July, 1776, the Continental Congress passed the Declaration of Independence and people began to sign the document. All signatures were not completed until August 2, 1776. The Declaration announced the political separation of the 13 North American colonies from Great Britain.

Both Benjamin Franklin and Francis Hopkinson were among the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence.

Birth of Franklin Benjamin Oliver

Franklin Oliver was born on April 8, 1787, in Bordentown, New Jersey. He was one of the 11 children born to John and Mary Oliver.

Hopkinson Portrait of Benjamin Franklin

Oliver family legend is that Francis Hopkinson painted or sketched a portrait of Benjamin Franklin, and gave the portrait to him. Benjamin Franklin then gave the portrait to his friend, John Oliver. When John Oliver died in 1824, his son Franklin Oliver inherited the portrait.

If this portrait of Benjamin Franklin existed, it must have been painted sometime prior to the death of Hopkinson in 1791.

This story is supported by the biography of Franklin Oliver in the 1900 history book. The author of that book likely got his information from Oliver family members since Franklin Oliver died in 1881.

Internet searches were performed to find any example of a sketch or portrait made by Francis Hopkinson. One example of a sketch was one he did of the Great Seal of New Jersey.

Death of Benjamin Franklin and Francis Hopkinson

Ben Franklin died in 1790 in Philadelphia. He was 84 years old.
Francis Hopkinson died in 1791 and was 53 years old.

CHAPTER 3

1801 to 1817

John Oliver Buys Home of Thomas Paine

In 1892, Moncure Daniel Conway published a book titled *The Life of Thomas Paine With a History of His Literary, Political, and Religious Career in America, France, and England*.

In this book, Conway notes that near the end of his life, Thomas Paine was struggling to find funds to support himself. In 1806, three years before his death, he sold his home at the corner of Farnsworth and Church Streets to his good friend John Oliver.

⁹ It was bought for \$300 by his friend John Oliver, whose daughter, still residing in the house, told me that her father to the end of his life “thought everything of Paine.” John Oliver, in his old age, visited Colonel Ingersoll in order to testify against the aspersions on Paine’s character and habits.

John Oliver’s admiration of Thomas Paine is further illustrated by the fact that he named one of his sons Thomas Paine Oliver (1789-1859).

War of 1812

The War of 1812 lasted from June of 1812 to February of 1815. Franklin Oliver served in this war. Franklin was 15 years old when the war started and was 18 when the war ended.

His service is documented by the pension application filed by his third wife, Amaretta Smith (1833-1900).

WAR OF 1812		
NUMBERS	SOLDIER	BOUNTY LAND
S.O. 29364	Oliver, Franklin	HT 53710-40-57
S.b. 21213	WIDOW Amrita, b.	HT 33186-120-55
HO 45479	Wife - Florence Oliver Ross	
Wm.O. 25458	SERVICE Capt. Capt. Matt + Joseph Townsend N.J. Mil	
		Soldier file S.b. 21213 placed with these papers, widow and child's file Sept. 16, 1937 (m.s.s.)

Another source for documenting his service is from the **Records of officers and men of New Jersey in wars, 1791-1815**, found on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

Oliver, Charles, 31.
Oliver, Elijah, 101.
Oliver, Franklin, 136.
Oliver, Jeremiah, 245.
Oliver, Robert, 219.
Oliver, Samuel, 154.
Oliver, William B., 216.

A third source is the U.S. War of 1812 Service Records 1812-1815.

U.S., War of 1812 Service Records, 1812-1815

[View Record](#)

Name Franklin Oliver

Company READ'S BATTALION NEW JERSEY
MILITIA.

Rank - Induction PRIVATE

Rank - Discharge PRIVATE

Roll Box 156

Microfilm Publication M602

Household Members

The only description of the activities of Read's Battalion was found in the 1883 book titled *History of Burlington and Mercer Counties, New Jersey, with Biographical Sketches of Many of the Their Prominent Pioneers and Prominent men.*

The War of 1812-14.—The successes of this war were mainly achieved by the navy on the ocean and the lakes. On land but two triumphs occurred of any considerable importance,—Plattsburgh and New Orleans.

Our nation was weak, our resources were limited. England, powerful and insolent, had never fully recognized our independence. Every feeling of honor and manhood demanded our resentment of continued insults and wrongs, and although we had many humiliations inflicted upon us, not the least of which

was the capture of our capital by the British and the burning of our national records, no more gallant spirits ever breathed than the heroes of our victories, and no more heroic acts were ever performed on water or land than occurred during that war.

During the war the militia were not without service in the field, while in the volunteers and in the navy the county was honorably represented. The drawing from the State whatever records it possessed to supply in part the place of those destroyed by the British at Washington has rendered an accurate account of the movements of the militia impossible to obtain.

Maj. Read's battalion was stationed at Billingsport, on the Delaware, and was in service from September 19th to Dec. 22, 1814. It appears to have had two majors, but was called after Read. The field and staff were Maj. Samuel J. Read, Maj. John Larzelere, Lieut. and Adjutant William Goldy, Lieut. and Quartermaster William Hancock, Surgeon's Mate Charles F. Lott.

The company officers were: Capt. Samuel Jones, Lieut. William Goldy, Ensign Joseph Foster, Capt. Joseph Townsend, Lieut. John Miles, Ensign Benjamin Yard, Orderly Sergt. Langhorn Thorn, Capt. Joseph Hartshorne, Lieut. William Gamble, Ensign Stephen Cramer. Capt. John Selah, Lieut. Isaac Jones, Ensign John P. Garwood, Capt. Isaac Kelly, Lieut. Jonathan Schooley, Ensign William S. Carter.

We were unable to obtain a copy of the muster rolls of this battalion, as the War Department, for obvious reasons, has requested the adjutant-general State of New Jersey not to furnish complete rolls to any one while applications for pension for that service are pending before the United States Pension Office. This bar will probably not be removed for several years.

One family handwritten document indicates that Franklin Oliver received a pension of \$8 per month as a veteran of the War of 1812.

One web site with all the pension plans for war veterans stated the following regarding War of 1812 veterans. (web site at <https://tinyurl.com/4sjs3mpp>)

In 1871 pensions of \$8 per month were granted to surviving soldiers of the war of 1812, without regard to rank, who served sixty days in that war or had been honorably mentioned in a resolution of Congress for service therein, and who had not espoused the cause of the late rebellion, and to their widows in cases where marriage occurred prior to the end of the war.

The family handwritten record amount of \$8 per month is historically accurate. A pension of \$8 per month in 1871 would be equivalent to a pension of \$175 per month in 2020 dollars.

Franklin Oliver Not on Bordentown Monument of Veterans

Although his father, John Oliver, Revolutionary War veteran, is listed on the monument, Franklin Oliver, War of 1812 veteran is not listed on this monument. This monument can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/yckjht2p>.

Joseph Bonaparte in Bordentown

According to Wikipedia, Joseph Bonaparte lived in Bordentown from 1817 until 1832. In 1817, Franklin Oliver was 20 years old, and was living in Bordentown.

The 1900 history book recounts that Franklin Oliver worked for Joseph Bonaparte in Bordentown.

He was born in Bordentown, New Jersey, April 8, 1786, and by profession was a civil engineer and surveyor, and was following that occupation at the breaking out of the war of 1812. He enlisted in the service almost as soon as war was proclaimed and served through it with distinction. He was at one time employed as general manager for Joseph Bonaparte, ex-king of Spain, a brother of the great Napoleon the First.

Since Franklin Oliver died in 1881, the author of the 1900 history book likely got his information from the Oliver family.

It was well documented that Joseph Bonaparte was in Bordentown for many years. He sold the crown jewels of Spain to finance the building of a fine estate with roads and bridges. No other sources could be found for documenting that Franklin Oliver worked for Joseph Bonaparte.

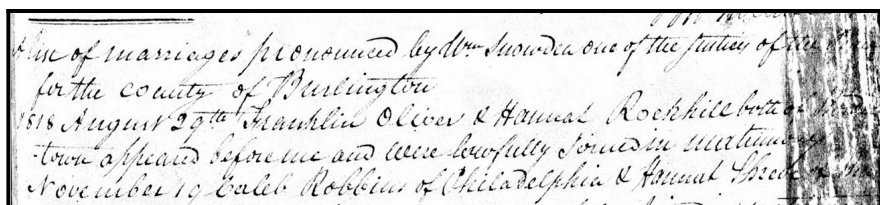
At some point in time, Franklin Oliver learned the necessary skills required to be a land surveyor. It is well documented in many sources that Franklin Oliver worked as a successful surveyor in Illinois. The source of his training is still unknown.

CHAPTER 4

1818

Marriage

Franklin Oliver married Hannah L. “Ann” Rockhill on August 29, 1818 in Burlington, New Jersey. Their marriage was recorded in the New Jersey marriage records.



Her marriage is also documented in the U.S. Quaker Meeting Records shown on Ancestry.com.

Franklin Oliver was 21 years old when he married and Hannah Rockhill was 24 years old. Hannah was the daughter of John Rockhill (1760-1806) and Hannah Mathis (1755-1863).

Franklin and Hannah Oliver had 5 children.

Edward Rockhill Oliver	1819-1902
Helen Frances Oliver	1822-1862
Elias Bordenott Oliver	1823-1872
Franklin Clarence Oliver II	1827-1893
James M. Oliver	1831-1910

Edward Oliver Family

The 1900 history book has a biography for Edward R. Oliver.

Edward R., who served as a private soldier in the Mexican war, and was also a captain in the Confederate service during the civil war. He now resides in Corpus Christi, Texas, where he owns Montreal ranch, consisting of twenty thousand acres, and is one of the wealthy men of that region.

A Texas newspaper search for an obituary for Edward R. Oliver was unsuccessful. No obituary could be found in the Chatsworth Plaindealer, Fairbury Blade, or the Bloomington Pantagraph. Ancestry.com records indicate Edward Oliver was married twice.

The first wife of Edward was Miss Hunter (1820-1851) and they had one child, Frances J. Oliver (1844-1908). She married John McGregor (1834-1903).

The second wife of Edward Oliver was Belinda C. Fulbright. They had three children.

The first child of Edward and Belinda Oliver was James Oliver who was born in 1850. His death date is unknown.

The second child of Edward and Belinda was David M. Oliver (1853-1908). He married Alice B. Allen (1862-1927).

Edward Oliver Jr. (1869-1947) was the third child. He married Alice Louisa Frank (1874-1955).

Records indicate all four of Edward's children died in the Corpus Christi, Texas area.

Helen Oliver Family

The second child of Franklin and Hannah Oliver was Helen Oliver (1822-1862). She married Adam Miller (1820-1857) and they had three children.

The first child of Adam and Helen Miller was Franklin Miller who was born in 1850. He married Melissa Baughman (1854-1914).

The second child of Adam and Helen was George B. Miller. He married Ella Percell (1857-1944).

Susan H. Miller, born in 1856, was the third child of Adam and Helen Miller. No further information was found on her life.

When her first husband died in 1857, Helen Oliver then married John S. Foster (1799-1886). They had two children.

The first child of Helen and John Foster was Charles Foster (1859-1935). He married Luella B. Wilder (1868-1930).

The second child of Helen and John Foster was John Foster (1862-1935). He married Paulena Manard (1871-1935).

Elias Oliver Family

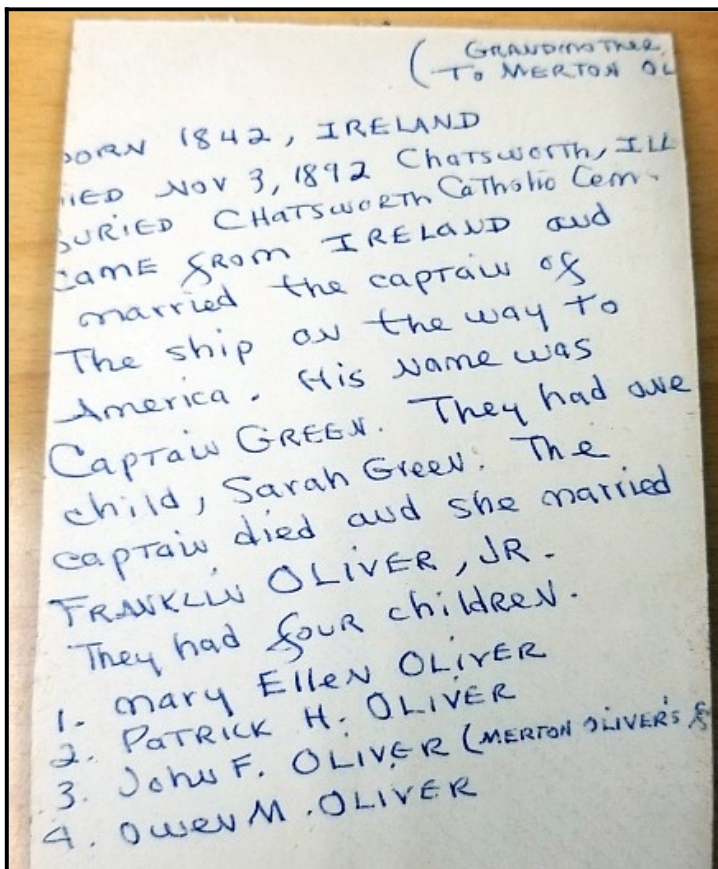
The third child of Franklin and Hannah Oliver was Elias Bordenott Oliver (1823-1872). Ancestry.com records indicate he married Louisa J. Cannon (1833-). They had one child, Mary Julia Oliver (1859-1899). Elias followed the trade of his father and became a surveyor in the Topeka, Kansas, area.

Mary Oliver married Floyd Baker Irish (1852-1912).

Franklin C. Oliver II Family

The fourth child of Franklin and Hannah Oliver was Franklin C. Oliver II (1827-1893). Ancestry.com records indicate he married Ellen Green.

The Chatsworth Library has a photograph with an interesting description on the back.



The front of the photograph is shown below.



Additional research found the death certificate for the daughter born to the ship captain and Ellen. The death certificate for Sarah Ann Green – Todd states that she was born June 19, 1846 in Boston and her father was William Green who was born in Liverpool, England. Her mother was listed as Ellen McBarry who was born in Ireland. Sarah Ann Green married John Todd and she died in 1918 in Chicago.

On the 1855 Illinois marriage certificate, Ellen gave her name as Mrs. Ellen Green.

Franklin and Ellen Oliver had four children. Their first child was Mary Ellen Oliver (1854-1944). She married Peter Paul Kurtenbach (1853-1928).

Ancestry.com has the photograph shown below of Peter and Mary Kurtenbach.



Uncle Pete & Aunt Mary Ellen Kurtenbach

The obituary for Mary Ellen Kurtenbach is shown below.

Chatsworth Plaindealer
March 30, 1944

DAUGHTER OF FIRST WHITE SETTLER DIES

Mrs. Mary Ellen Kurtenbach Passes After Long Illness

Another of Chatsworth's long esteemed and pioneer citizens passed to her reward Monday morning about 5:30 at her home in the village, in the death of Mrs. Mary Ellen Kurtenbach, 87. She had been ill for a long time and under the constant care of an attendant but being possessed of a very strong constitution, clung tenaciously to live.

About five years ago Mrs. Kurtenbach fell and fractured a hip from which injury she never fully recovered and for a long time had been bedfast.

Funeral Services Wednesday

Funeral services were held on Wednesday forenoon at 9:30 at Saints Peter and Paul's Catholic church, of which she had long been a faithful communicant. Services were conducted by the pastor, Rev. A. Timmons. Burial was in St. Patrick's cemetery.

Born in a Log Cabin

Mary Ellen Oliver was born on December 2, 1856, in a log cabin in Oliver's Grove south of Chatsworth, the daughter of Franklin and Mary Green Oliver. She was married April 5, 1874, to Peter Kurtenbach. He died in 1928. They lived on a farm south of Chatsworth until 1911 when they moved to town. Surviving are two

daughters, Mrs. Mary Ellen Watson, Chatsworth; Mrs. Kathryn Pittinger, Berkeley, Calif.; two sons, Peter and John, both of Chatsworth; 27 grandchildren and twenty great grandchildren.

Mrs. Kurtenbach's father was the first white settler in the Chatsworth community. He stopped here while as a government surveyor and was on a mission to Missouri. He concluded he had found a location to his liking, so selected a spot for a cabin, made peace with the Indians who were then quite numerous, and spent the remainder of his life here but died in Chenoa at the age of 96 while on a trip there. His body rests in the Chatsworth cemetery.

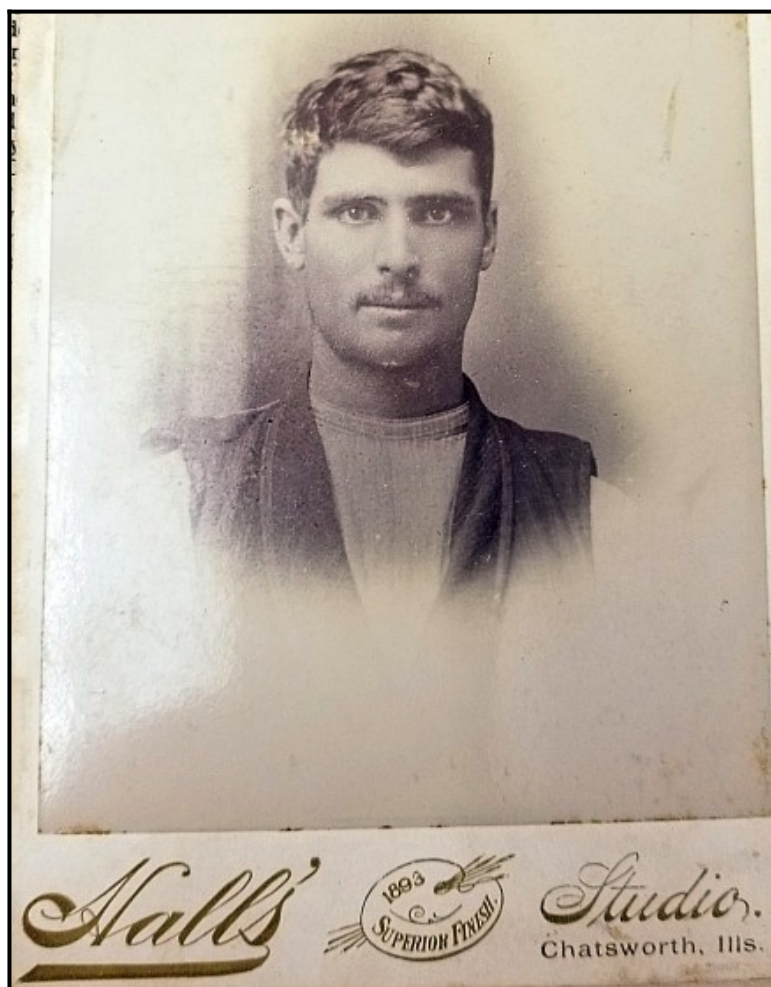
Mrs. Kurtenbach was the mother of 12 children, only four of whom survive. Due to illness Mrs. Watson was not able to attend the funeral of her mother and her sister was unable to procure reservation to make the trip by plane from her western home.

This 1944 obituary recounted that when Franklin Oliver died 63 years earlier in 1881, he was buried in the Chatsworth cemetery. At this time, the final resting place of Franklin Oliver is still not verified.

Patrick Oliver

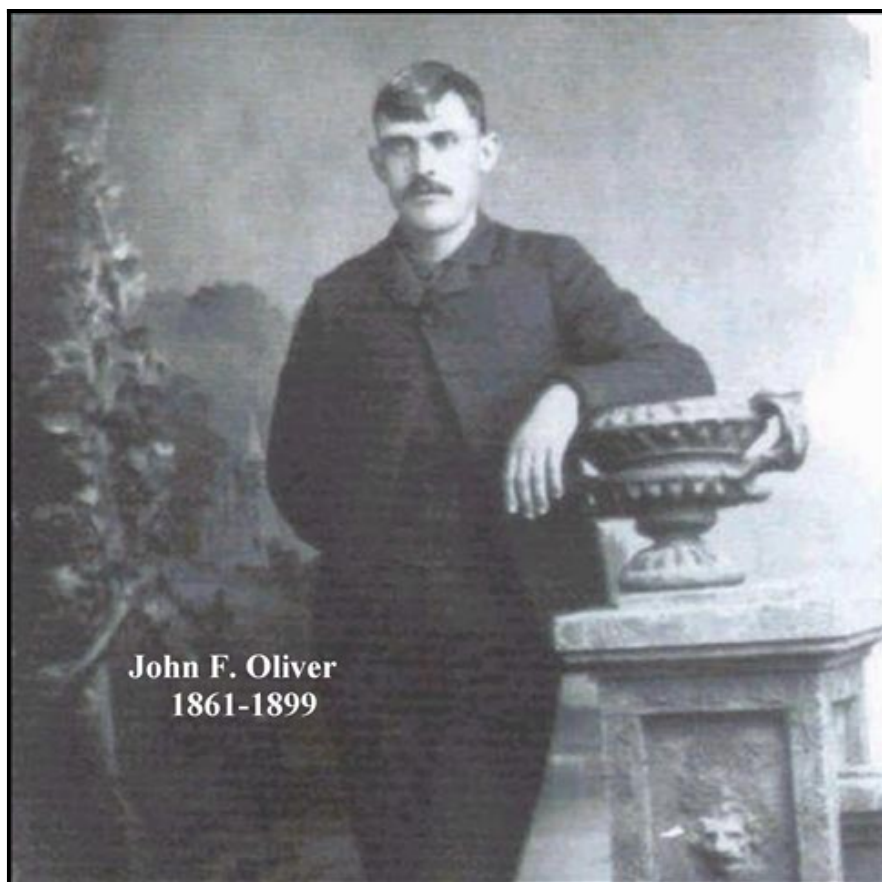
The second child of Franklin and Ellen Oliver was Patrick Oliver (1860-1893). He married Margaret McCune (1855-1887). Patrick Oliver was only 33 years old when he died.

Ancestry.com has a photograph of Patrick Oliver. It was taken in 1893, the same year that he died.



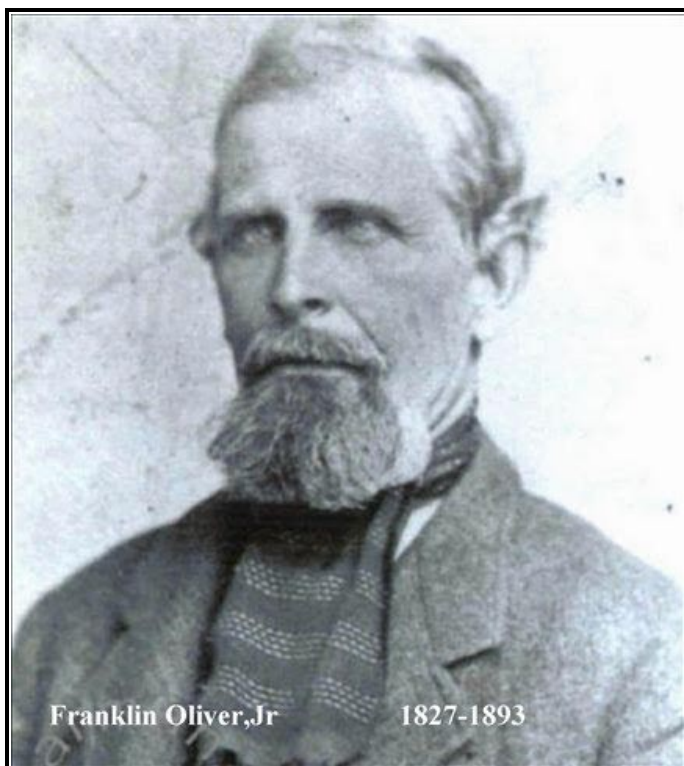
The third child of Franklin and Ellen Oliver was John F. Oliver (1863-1899). He married Catherine M. Miller (1878-1949).

Ancestry.com has a photograph of John F. Oliver.



The fourth child of Franklin and Ellen Oliver was Michael Owen Oliver (1865-1893). Michael was only 28 years old when he died.

Someone posted a photo of Franklin C. Oliver Jr. on Ancestry.com.



James M. Oliver Family

The fifth child of Franklin and Hannah Oliver was James M. Oliver (1831-1910). The 1900 history book reported that James was a civil engineer engaged in engineering and mining at Ophir, California. Ancestry.com records indicate he never married and died in California.

The Chatsworth Library has a photo labeled “James Oliver – California.”



CHAPTER 5

1819-1831

Unpaid Post Office Mail

In the 1800s, if you went to the Post Office to pick up your mail, you had to pay the postage in order to be able to get the mail. From time to time, Postmasters would publish a list of unclaimed mail in the local newspaper. The January 6, 1823, Trenton Federalist newspaper published a list of unclaimed mail. Both John Oliver and Franklin Oliver were on this list.

**A LIST of LETTERS remaining
in the Post-Office in Bordentown, N
J. January 1st, 1823.**

A LYDIA ALLEN, Joab Applegate 2.—
(B.) Jacob P. Bunting, James O. Bates,
(C.) Mrs. Margaret Conover, Jane Crawford.
(D.) Peter Deveny. (E.) Walter S. Evans.
(G.) Mrs. Graham, John Graham, esq. (H.)
Thomas Heritage, Joseph Hendrickson, Da-
vid Hance, esq. (L.) Samuel Lovell, Joseph
Lovell 2. (M.) Margaret M'Mains, Eliza-
beth M'Kown, Joseph M'Knight, Mrs. Mary
Moncrief. (O.) John Oliver, Franklin Oliver.
(P.) Edward Page. (R.) Mrs. Elizabeth
Rinear, Wm. Reeves. (S.) Anna Simpson,
Mrs. Susan Schull. (T.) Joseph Thorn,
John Thorn, Hatter, Clayton Taylor, Samuel
C. Taylor. (W.) Nicholas Waln, Wm. Wood-
house, Peter Wikoff, esq. Samuel Wilkinson.

THOS. LAWRENCE, P. M.
Bordentown, January 4, 1823. 45.5w

Death of John Oliver in Bordentown

John Oliver died in Bordentown on April 7, 1824. No gravestone could be found using FindAGrave.com.

A death notice was published in the May 17, 1824, issue of the Trenton Federalist newspaper. The notice stated that John Oliver Esquire died in Bordentown in his 92nd year of age. If John Oliver was born in 1732 and died in 1824, he would have been 92 years of age.

The Kickapoo On The Move

In the 1878 history book, the Kickapoo moved to a site three and a half miles south of Fairbury.

In the Spring of 1828, the Kickapoo's removed their headquarters within the present bounds of Livingston County. They erected a council house and built a village on the east side of Indian Grove, and their tribe at that time numbered about 700 souls. They possessed all the ordinary characteristics of the typical American Indian—the copper complexion, black, straight hair, well-proportioned limbs and keen, black eyes.

The women were far more attractive in personal appearance than the generality of squaws, notwithstanding the fact that upon them devolved all the drudgery of domestic life; and, while they remained at Indian Grove, the women cultivated the land, after a rude fashion, and raised corn, beans, and potatoes,, while the men devoted themselves to hunting and fishing, but the squaws were expected to dress all the game after it was brought home.

In the Spring of 1830, they removed to Oliver's Grove, then known as Kickapoo Grove, where they erected a large and permanent council house, ninety-seven wigwams and several encampments.

It was here that an exact census of them was taken, and they numbered-- men, women, and children--- 630 souls.

Kickapoo Houses

The Illinois State Museum in Springfield has several dioramas that illustrate typical life scenes from the Kickapoo. The diorama show below likely represents the appearance of the Kickapoo houses in Fairbury and then Chatsworth.



There are four other dioramas that illustrate typical life scenes of the Kickapoo people.









First Settler Arrives in Livingston County

The story of the Darnall's settling south of Fairbury is recounted in this 2020 Blade newspaper story written by Dale C. Maley.

First Fairbury Area Family Arrived 190 Years Ago

Hugh Steers was born in 1756 in Cork, Ireland. He emigrated from Ireland to the United States and then served as a soldier in the Revolutionary War. His first major battle was in 1871 against Native Americans who were friendly to the British. The Native Americans won the battle, and Hugh Steers was taken as a prisoner. Hugh was kept captive by the Native Americans until his freedom was negotiated with the Shawnee nation in 1873. After the War ended, Hugh Steers married Mary Fowler in Kentucky. They had a large family of 11 children in Boone County, Kentucky. One of their children, Rachel Steers, was born in 1793.

Valentine Martin Darnall was born in Virginia in 1797. At the age of 20, Valentine married Rachel Steers in Boone County, Kentucky, in 1818. Rachel was 25 years old when she married Valentine Darnall. They had six children in Kentucky.

In 1830, Valentine was 33 years old, and his wife Rachel was 37 years old. They decided to move their family of six children west to Illinois. They chose to move and set up a farm south of what is now Fairbury. Central Illinois was the last part of Illinois to be settled.

In October of 1830, the Darnall family started their trek from Boone County, Kentucky, to what is now Indian Grove Township. The trip took several weeks. They made the journey with an old-fashioned scooped bed wagon, which had a tremendous capacity for carrying household goods. Four horses drew their wagon, and this horse team struggled to pull the heavy wagon

through the deep mud they encountered. The Darnall family arrived at their new home on October 27, 1830.

The first priority for Valentine Darnall was to build a log cabin for his family. Mr. Valentine built their first log cabin using the only tool he owned, an ax. The house was finished by November 1, 1830. The Darnall family spent their first winter in this log cabin.

The next major challenge the Darnall family faced was the terrible winter of 1830-1831. This winter came to be known as the winter of the "great snow." The food supply for the Darnall family was about to run out. Mr. Darnall decided to travel by horseback to a small settlement at Mackinaw to purchase more provisions. Shortly after Valentine Darnall arrived at Mackinaw, heavy snow began to fall with calm winds. The snow kept falling until it reached a depth of four feet. Once the snow stopped, a drizzling rain turned to sleet. Intensely cold weather moved in, and the country was covered with a sheet of ice overlaying the snow.

The weather conditions made it impossible to travel by horseback. Mr. Darnall was forced to remain at Mackinaw for five days with the knowledge that his family was suffering for food. They could not even obtain the wild game for the snow had killed all wild things and buried them under its white blanket.

Mr. Darnall finally made his perilous journey back to his cabin on horseback over the ice-crusted snow. On the front of the saddle, Mr. Darnall had the carcass of a deer, while fastened to his saddle's back were the much-needed provisions.

The last native American Indian tribe who lived in the Fairbury area were the Kickapoo. In the early 1800s, they had a settlement at Leroy, Illinois. In 1828, about 700 Kickapoo moved from Leroy to about four miles

southwest of present-day Fairbury. In 1830, the 630 tribe members moved to Oliver's Grove south of Chatsworth. The Chatsworth settlement had a council house, 97 wigwams, and several small encampments.

The Kickapoo tribe members still frequented the area where the Darnall family chose to settle. Valentine Darnall tried to deal fairly and honestly with the Kickapoo he encountered. The Kickapoo gave him the name of the "good shomoki man," meaning the good white man.

During the terrible winter of 1830-1831, the Kickapoo realized the Darnall family was running low on food. They gave the Darnall family some brown beans to eat. The family could also grow more food next spring.

The story was often recited that Mrs. Darnall once asked an old Chief if he and his tribesmen would kill them if an uprising should occur. The old Chief is said to have replied, "Oh yes, but we kill them quickly," meaning that they would not be tortured.

In 1832, the Black Hawk war made it necessary for Mr. Darnall to temporarily move his family to Mackinaw for safety. After peace was declared, the family returned to their log cabin and farm.

In 1930, a huge celebration was held at the W. D. Spence farm commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Valentine and Rachel Darnall's family settling south of Fairbury. One hundred forty-four direct descendants attended the festivities. Lunch was served at noon for the hundreds of direct descendants and friends. The Fairbury high school band played, and numerous speeches were given.

One of the most exciting and enjoyable features of the day was the "Style Show." Twelve young ladies and two

young men, all of whom were either grandchildren or great-grandchildren of Mr. and Mrs. Darnall, got dressed in old clothing. The children then passed in review, wearing various periods of dress worn within the past 100 years. These different articles of wearing apparel had been resurrected from old trunks and attics and were genuine articles. Among them were long dresses and balloon sleeves, ruffles and flounces, skin-fitting men's trousers, high hats, etc. A group photograph of the direct descendants was taken. The only two attendees from the Fairbury area in the 1930 photo known to be still alive include Marilyn Payne-Wells and her brother Howard Payne.

The Darnall family was the first pioneer settlers of the Fairbury area and Livingston County. Many descendants of the Darnall family still live in the Fairbury area. The original homestead is still owned by family descendants 190 years after Valentine and Rachel Steers came to Fairbury.

Oliver Land Dispute with the Railroad

The May 14, 1831, edition of the Emporium and True American newspaper began running the same public notice ad in several issues. Apparently, the Oliver family refused to sell their land to the railroad. The railroad then forcibly took the land using the law of eminent domain.

*To Mary Oliver, Margaret Oliver, Ann Oliver,
Robert Oliver, Thomas P. Oliver, John Oliver,
Franklin Oliver, Washington Oliver, and Eli-
zabeth Carman.*

TAKE NOTICE,

That the Camden & Amboy Rail Road & Transportation Company, have given a particular description in writing, to the Honorable George K. Drake, one of the Justices of the Supreme Court of Judicature, of the State of New-Jersey, of certain lands situate in the Borough of Bordentown, in the township of Chesterfield, in the county of Burlington, now in the possession or occupation of the said Mary Oliver, Margaret Oliver and Ann Oliver, or some of them, and of which it is said, you, the said Mary, Margaret, Ann, Robert, Thomas John, Franklin, Washington and Elizabeth, claim to be the owners required for the use of the said company, in the construction of the said road, under the oath of an Engineer of the company; and that the said the Honorable George K. Drake, hath assigned Saturday the fourth day of June next, at the hour of 2 o'clock, in the afternoon ~~or on Monday, at the house of Samuel Rogers, Inn-~~ keeper, in the city of Burlington, for the appointment under his hand and seal, of three disinterested, impartial and judicious freeholders, not resident in the county of Burlington, to examine and appraise the said land, and assess the damages, to be paid by the said company, for the land so described and required in the construction of the said road, pursuant to the provisions of an act entitled "An act to incorporate the Camden and Amboy Rail Road and Transportation Company," passed the 4th day of February 1830, and the act relative to said company, passed February 4th, 1831.

WM. COOK, Assistant Engineer
and Agent of said company.

May 14th, 1831.

519.

Franklin Oliver Gives Confusing Interview in 1878

Franklin Oliver visited Springfield in 1878 and gave a confusing interview to a local newspaper reporter. The October 23, 1878 edition of the Daily Illinois State Register published the following story.

THE OLD SETTLER.--Mr. Franklin Oliver, of Oliver's Grove, Livingston County, was in the city yesterday, and dined at the Revere. Mr. Oliver is perhaps the oldest citizen of central Illinois, having settled upon the farm which he now owns in May, 1826.

He was born at Boydentown, New Jersey, May 20, 1780, and resided in that state until 1819, when he removed to New Orleans, where he remained until 1823, when he went to St. Louis, and from thence to Kaskaskia,, where he remained three years. Mr. Oliver is in the enjoyment of excellent health, and bids fair to live for many years to come.

In 1878, Franklin Oliver was 81 years old. The article contains several known errors. The first error is that Mr. Oliver did not arrive in Livingston County until 1832, not 1826. The author of the 1878 history book did a detailed job of identifying the first settlers in Livingston County.

The second error is that Oliver's hometown of Bordentown is misspelled as Boydentown.

Oliver reported his birth year to the reporter as 1780 and most data indicates he was not born until 1787.

No data can be found which supports the facts that he went from New Jersey, to New Orleans and Kaskaskia, prior to moving to Livingston County. Mr. Oliver can not be found in the 1820 U.S. Census.

CHAPTER 6

1832

With respect to Livingston County history, 1832 is the pivotal year for Franklin Oliver. In early 1832, he decided to move his family from New Jersey to Livingston County, Illinois. In 1832, his family members and their ages are shown below.

Franklin Oliver	35
Hannah Oliver	32
Edward R. Oliver	13
Helen F. Oliver	10
Elias B. Oliver	9
Franklin C. Oliver	5
James Oliver	1

Accuracy of Livingston County History Books

When performing historical research, the best reference material is that material dated the closest to the event being studied. In this case, the closest material is the 1878 history book. When this book was written, the author was able to interview Judge McDowell from Fairbury and Franklin Oliver from Chatsworth. The book author could also cross-check among these and other early settlers if he heard conflicting stories. Franklin Oliver was 81 years old when the book was written. Judge McDowell, who's family arrived north of Fairbury in 1832, was 14 years old. Both men were relying on their memories to recount events that had occurred almost 50 years before.

The 1900 history book is generally accepted as a less accurate recounting of historical events than the 1878 history book. By 1900, very few pioneer settlers were still alive. Franklin Oliver died in 1881, so he was not available to be interviewed. His surviving

family members would have to provide information to the editor of the 1900 history book.

Definition of Best Land

Today, Livingston County farm land is valued by its crop production productivity in terms of bushels of corn or soybeans produced per acre.

Pioneer settlers in the 1800s had a completely different definition of good land. They defined good land as being located next to water and having timber growing on it.

A check was performed to see how closely pioneers followed this guideline when they settled the three townships that today make up the Fairbury area (Avoca, Indian Grove, and Belle Prairie). In every single case, each pioneer farmer settled next to Indian Creek or the Vermilion River.

Prior to the 1880s, most of the land in Livingston County was swampy. Because of this, Livingston County was one of the last counties to be populated in Illinois. In the 1880s, clay tile was introduced and it drained the swamps.

Ironically, the land that was thought to be the most valuable in the 1800s is now considered the poorest land available. The worthless swamp land in the 1800s is now some of the most valuable farmland on the planet.

Franklin Oliver would have considered farmland next to water with a lot of timber as the most valuable in Livingston County.

Why Franklin Oliver Stopped in Livingston County

The only story of why Franklin Oliver decided to stop his journey west and stop in Livingston County comes from Alma Lewis James 1976 Stuffed Clubs book.

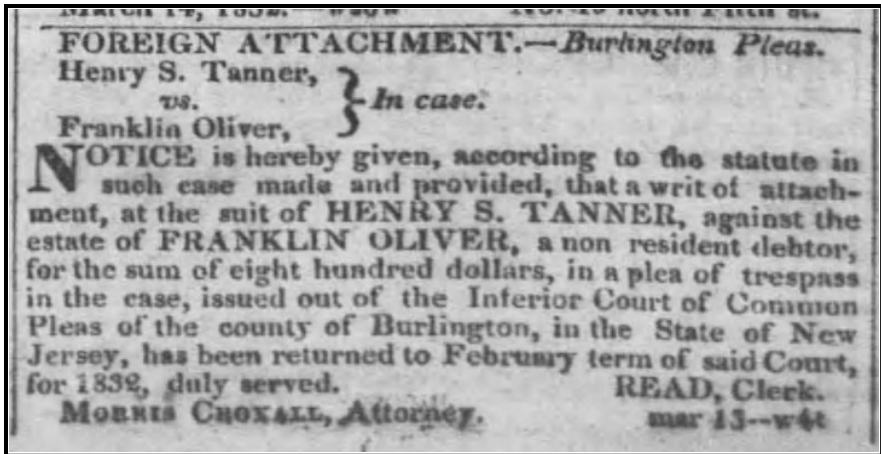
According to the family legend, Oliver, with his wife and children, was headed for California when he came to this grove of trees which appealed to him as a camp site. He entered it, and immediately found himself surrounded by Indians. He drove his case knife into the nearest tree as a sign of peace, and the Kickapoo's presently withdrew to their council fire to hold a pow-wow. Mrs. Oliver built a little fire of her own, and cooked supper for her family.

After they had eaten, the Indians returned to conduct him to their chief, who offered him their pipe of peace. Oliver was not a smoker, but he always said this was one time when he was glad to indulge. The family lived in a teepee at first, and then the Indians helped them build a log cabin. They were friendly, but they were still suspicious of him, for the Black Hawk War was brewing.

Unfortunately, Alma Lewis James did not cite her source for this story, except to say it was family legend. Since the McDowell family had settled north of Fairbury in May of 1832 and Franklin Oliver was already settled at the Kickapoo camp, he must have arrived sometime between January and May of 1832.

Owed \$800 Back in Bordentown

A series of legal notices began running in the Philadelphia National Gazette on March 14, 1832.



Apparently, Franklin Oliver had left Bordentown prior to March of 1832 while owing Mr. Tanner \$800. This debt would be equivalent to \$21,000 in 2021 dollars.

Black Hawk War

The handful of pioneer settlers in Livingston County grew very worried when the Black Hawk War broke out. Wikipedia recounts this war which lasted from April 6 to August 27, 1832.

The Black Hawk War was a conflict between the United States and Native Americans led by Black Hawk, a Sauk leader. The war erupted after Black Hawk and a group of Sauks, Meskwakis (Fox), and Kickapoos, known as the "British Band", crossed the Mississippi River, into the U.S. state of Illinois, from Iowa Indian Territory in April 1832. Black Hawk's motives were ambiguous, but

he was apparently hoping to reclaim land sold to the United States in the disputed 1804 Treaty of St. Louis.

U.S. officials, convinced that the British Band was hostile, mobilized a frontier militia and opened fire on a delegation from the Native Americans on May 14, 1832. Black Hawk responded by successfully attacking the militia at the Battle of Stillman's Run. He led his band to a secure location in what is now southern Wisconsin and was pursued by U.S. forces. Meanwhile, other Native Americans conducted raids against forts and colonies largely unprotected with the absence of the militia. Some Ho-Chunk and Potawatomi warriors took part in these raids, although most tribe members tried to avoid the conflict. The Menominee and Dakota tribes, already at odds with the Sauks and Meskwakis, supported the United States.

Commanded by General Henry Atkinson, the U.S. forces tracked the British Band. Militia under Colonel Henry Dodge caught up with the British Band on July 21 and defeated them at the Battle of Wisconsin Heights. Black Hawk's band was weakened by hunger, death, and desertion, and many native survivors retreated towards the Mississippi. On August 2, U.S. soldiers attacked the remnants of the British Band at the Battle of Bad Axe, killing many and capturing most who remained alive. Black Hawk and other leaders escaped, but later surrendered and were imprisoned for a year.

Pioneers Temporarily Go To Indiana

The 1878 history book recounts how the scared pioneer settlers temporarily went to Indiana during the Black Hawk War.

On the 5th day of May, 1832, William McDowell, from Sciota County, Ohio, with his five sons, John, Hiram, Woodford G., Joseph and James, and his two daughters, Betty and Hannah, settled in what is now Avoca Township, on the Little Vermilion. Their nearest white neighbor on the south was one Philip Cook; but they could call around on Frederick Rook, Isaac Jordan or William Popejoy, almost any time, by going a distance of from five to fifteen miles.

The elder McDowell displayed excellent judgment in selecting this location, for after forty-five years' continued farming, the soil is still rich and productive.

The McDowells at once proceeded to erect their cabin. The principal tool used in its construction was an axe. They brought with them a few panes of glass for a window, and, in this particular, they had the advantage of their neighbors. The boards which furnished the material for the door and window casing of this primitive dwelling, were purchased of the Kickapoo Indians, and were brought from Oliver's Grove with an ox team. The Indians had hewn them out for some purpose of their own, but were induced to part with them for a small supply of ammunition.

The Black Hawk War was then in active operation, and this settlement was within a short march of the headquarters of this terrible chief. This same year, Wm. Popejoy, John Hanneman and Franklin Oliver located,

and soon took an active part in the affairs of the settlement. Black Hawk maintained his position, and the situation of the settlers became alarming, as it was not known what attitude the Kickapoo Indians (numbering 630) at Oliver's Grove, would assume; and, on the 20th of May, they were waited upon by a deputation of whites for the purpose of ascertaining their intentions.

At this meeting, the venerable Franklin Oliver presided. On their return from the council, the members of the deputation stopped at the McDowell cabin and took dinner, and they advised the settlers either to abandon their homes or proceed to erect fortifications. The latter scheme was impracticable, for the reason that there were but two rifles in the whole settlement, and very little ammunition.

On the 27th of May, all the white men in the settlement held a council, and it was then and there decided that the best thing that could be done, under the circumstances, was to retire to the white settlements in Indiana; and, on the evening of the 28th, the entire white population camped in and around the McDowell cabin, preparatory to a march the next morning.

This company consisted of the McDowell family, and William Popejoy, Abner Johnson, Uriah Blue, Isaac Jordan and John Hanneman, and their families – thirty-one souls in all. In speaking of this party, Hon. Woodford G. McDowell, who was one of the number, says: "I feel sure, if the entire outfit had been required to raise twenty-five dollars among them, or be scalped by the Indians, they would have been compelled to throw up the sponge—they could not have raised the money."

On the morning of the 29th of May, the whole company of seven families, in six wagons, took up the line of march and left the embryo county in possession of the Indians. Darnall must have retreated some time previous, as his name is not mentioned in this exodus, and as far as Oliver is concerned, he came and went among the Indians at his own pleasure, and without fear of molestation. He thoroughly understood their character, and was accounted a favorite among them; and, in fact, an Indian chief was called after his name.

During the march to Indiana, several interesting incidents transpired. The more timid were in hourly anticipation of an attack from Black Hawk, and could scarcely be persuaded to regulate their pace with the ox teams which drew the women and children.

On the second day of their march, the wife of Isaac Jordan presented him with an infant daughter; and James McDowell, then a young man of 17 years, together with another youth, walked to a grove of timber four miles distant to procure wood enough to build a camp fire. On their return, they found the camp in great commotion. A couple of Indians had been seen on a ridge overlooking the camp, and then to disappear in the tall grass. Women and children were crying, and even some of the men were badly frightened, and counseled an immediate flight, as they supposed the Indians they had seen were scouts sent out by Black Hawk. Others were less excited, and proceeded to light the camp fire and prepare their supper, the elder McDowell remarking, as he held his frying-pan over the fire, that "he did not propose to be scalped on an empty stomach." It was soon ascertained, however, that the Indians were two friendly Kickapoos, who had come

to bid their white friends farewell; but the incident proved the different material of which the company was composed, and had not a little to do with the estimate in which they subsequently held each other's character.

The next day, the mother and child were left at the house of Philip Cook, before mentioned, as this was considered sufficiently remote from the seat of war to be safe; and the remainder of the party pushed on to Indiana. A. B. Phillips and James Spence, with their families, had taken refuge within a fortification on the Mackinaw. But, in the Fall of the same year, nearly all of the persons mentioned in the exodus returned to their claims.

The 1878 history book reported the Kickapoo were forced to leave the State of Illinois in September of 1832. Franklin Oliver and his family remained on the abandoned Kickapoo camp site.

Father Walker

The 1878 history book also describes how Father Walker tried to introduce Christianity to the Kickapoo living with the Franklin Oliver family about three miles south of the village of Chatsworth.

The first preacher to proclaim the Word of God in this section was Old Father Walker, as he was called, of Ottawa, who in 1832 established a mission among the Indians, whose lodges were then spread in Oliver's Grove.

The following extract is from an address delivered before the Old Settlers' Society by Judge McDowell, of Fairbury, at the annual meeting in 1877:

"The early footprints of Methodism began in this part of the country in 1832. Old Father Walker, who established a mission at the Kickapoo town (now Oliver's Grove), where there was, at that time, a village of ninety-seven wigwams, one large council house, several small encampments, and 630 Indians in all, men; women and children. Father Walker came out occasionally and held meetings with them, appointed and ordained a missionary minister of their own tribe, who always held services on the Sabbath, when Father Walker was not there.

Their prayer book was a walnut board, on which were characters carved with a knife, and at the top an engraving. They had a great respect for the Sabbath, and no Indian thought of retiring at night without consulting his board." These ministrations of Father Walker were the first we have any account of any in this section, and were probably the first in Livingston County. As there are no church buildings in the township, outside of the village of Chatsworth, this part of our history will be again alluded to in connection with the village.

The old Indian trail that marked the dividing line between the Kickapoo and Pottawatomie tribes was plainly visible through this town, long after settlements were made and the pale-faces had become numerous. And there are still settlers living here who can point out the line along which the trail led.

1833 Map

Tanner's Universal Atlas has a map of Illinois done in 1833, one year after Franklin Oliver arrived in Illinois. This is also prior to the formation of Livingston County in 1837.

The map also illustrates why the early mail route was from Danville to Ottawa, since they were the only towns of any significant size in east central Illinois.



CHAPTER 7

1835

1846 Family Lawsuit Back in Bordentown

The John Oliver family from Bordentown was no stranger to legal squabbles between family members. The 1846 book titled *Reports of Cases Determined in the Court of Chancery of the State of New Jersey Volume III Containing the Cases from January 1834 to October 1836* recounts a John Oliver family lawsuit.

This lawsuit was heard in the 1835 term of the Court of Chancery. The title of the case was Ann Oliver v. Mary Oliver and others.

John Oliver died in 1824 in Bordentown, New Jersey. He owned significant real estate and wrote a very elaborate will. He wrote the will to include his nine children. These nine were John, Washington, Franklin, Thomas, Elizabeth, Margaret, Rebecca, Ann, and Mary.

John Oliver's will directed that his estate be split into 10 shares. His nine children were each to receive one-tenth of his estate. The remaining one-tenth of a share was to be used to support his unmarried daughters. John Oliver appointed Mary Oliver as the administrator of the share that supported the unmarried daughters.

Daughter Rebecca Oliver died in 1824, the same year her father died.

Eleven years after the death of John Oliver, daughter Ann Oliver filed suit against her sister Mary Oliver. Ann claimed that Mary mistreated her so badly she could not live in the same house with Mary and Margaret. Ann asked that the court take over administering the assets and provide an income to Ann.

The court found that John Oliver's intent was for the unmarried sisters to live in the same house. The court found there was no obligation for John Oliver to provide a separate home for each daughter.

In a rather unusual outcome, the court directed the Oliver daughters to learn to get along and live under the same roof.

Ann Oliver did not take the court's advice. She followed her brother Franklin Oliver to Illinois and she became a school teacher.

The entire legal finding can be accessed at
<https://tinyurl.com/4ezwrztu>.

REPORTS
OF
CASES
DETERMINED IN THE
Court of Chancery
OF THE
STATE OF NEW-JERSEY.

BY HENRY W. GREEN,
REPORTER.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING THE CASES FROM
January, 1834, to October, 1836, inclusive.

ELIZABETH-TOWN;
PRINTED BY EDWARD SANDERSON.

1846.

CHAPTER 8

1836

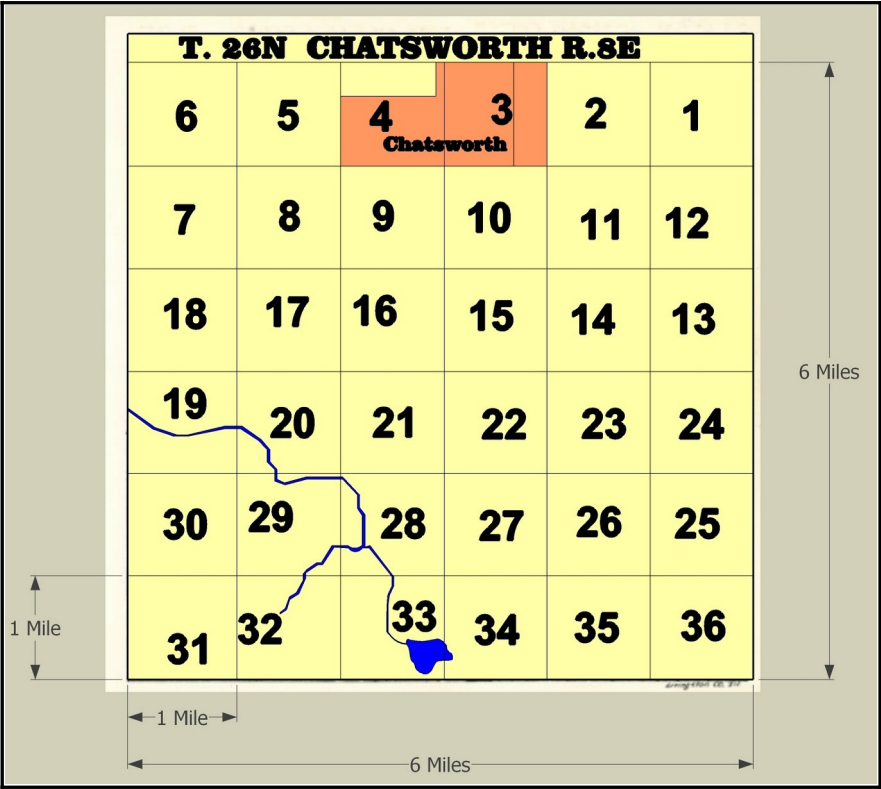
Start of Franklin Oliver Land Purchases

The first recorded transaction occurred in 1836. He continued to buy land from the federal government through 1867.

Legal Description of Land

A standard township is identified as being a square of six miles by six miles. A township is further defined as being made up of 36 sections. Each section is one mile by one mile and contains 640 acres.

Each township is assigned a north-south township number and an east-west range number. Below is an example of Chatsworth Township.



Land is legally defined as a fraction of each of the 36 sections as illustrated below.



Available Records

There is no known way to find land transactions which took place between private parties. In the case of Franklin Oliver, no data can be found regarding his purchases or sales of land to private individuals.

Fortunately, there are two databases which reflect purchases of land by individuals from the federal government. These are the only data sources available on the land purchases of Franklin Oliver.

The first database is maintained by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. It can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/ydnhkz35>. In this database, Franklin Oliver made 44 land purchase transactions.

The second database contains records from the State of Illinois. It can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/3aet9cm3>. In this database, Franklin Oliver made 74 land purchase transactions.

So this initial data sample illustrates that Franklin Oliver made 118 land purchase transactions between 1836 and 1867. This data indicates that Franklin Oliver purchased a total of 8,124 acres from the federal government.

Duplication of Data Between Databases

Unfortunately, the format of the two databases is not the same. In the federal database, a complete legal description of the land purchased is given. Purchases recorded in the state database do not give a complete legal description of the land. In the cases of lots purchased, the state database is very poor with respect to complete legal descriptions.

An Excel© spreadsheet was constructed. The 44 transactions from the federal database were entered into the spreadsheet. Next, the 74 transactions from the state database were entered. This data was combined into one searchable spreadsheet.

For each section of land that was purchased, it was assumed the federal database transaction was correct. Then the state transactions for that section were reviewed. Any duplicate was removed from the state transaction list. Many duplicates were found in the state database.

For standard sections of one mile by one mile, the total acres in that section is 640 acres. Each section was checked and three sections had purchases exceeding 640 acres. These three Livingston County sections are shown below.

Legal Description	Total Acres
26N 08E Section 33	691
26N 08E Section 28	640
26N 08E Section 5	787

The state transactions for that section were again reviewed and transactions were removed until the total fell below 640 acres.

The initial review of the information in the two databases showed that Franklin Oliver purchased 8,124 acres from the federal government.

After the data was carefully scrutinized and duplicate transactions were removed, the result was that Franklin Oliver purchased 4,711 acres. This is close to the historical records which recounted that he owned about 5,000 acres of land.

At any given point in time, Oliver could have sold land or bought land from individuals. These private transactions can not be determined over the 48 years that Oliver lived in Illinois.

Land Prices

The official price of land purchased from the government in Illinois started out at \$1.25 per acre and increased to \$2.50 per acre by the 1850s. The \$2.50 price in 1850 would be equivalent to \$79/acre in today's dollars.

Congress passed laws which awarded land to veterans of wars. For example, they passed a law in 1850 which granted the right to obtain free land for veterans of the War of 1812.

Most of these veterans did not live in Illinois and they had no interest in moving to the swamp lands of Central Illinois. They sold their rights typically for 10 cents on the dollar of the official government price.

In nearby Fairbury, Dr. Lorenzo Beach purchased some land using military veteran land patents for 30 cents per acre. He paid a cash price of \$2.50 per acre to purchase other land. The 30 cent military patent price was 12 cents on the dollar of the official price of \$2.50 per acre.

Adding Land Costs to the Excel Spreadsheet

In a few cases, the actual cash price was identified in the database. In most cases, the cash price was not identified. In the case of no data on cash price, purchases before 1850 were recorded with a price of \$1.25 per acre. Purchases after 1850 were recorded with a price of \$2.50 per acre.

No prices for military warrant transactions were entered into the databases because they were private transactions between veterans

and purchasers. A price of 30 cents per acre was assumed for all military patent purchases.

Of the 78 transactions only 17 were for cash. The bulk of the purchases, 61 transactions, were done with military warrants. This allowed Franklin Oliver to purchase huge tracts of land for a relatively low cost.

Combining the data from the two databases and making the adjustments noted above gives a year-by-year summary of Franklin Oliver's land purchases.

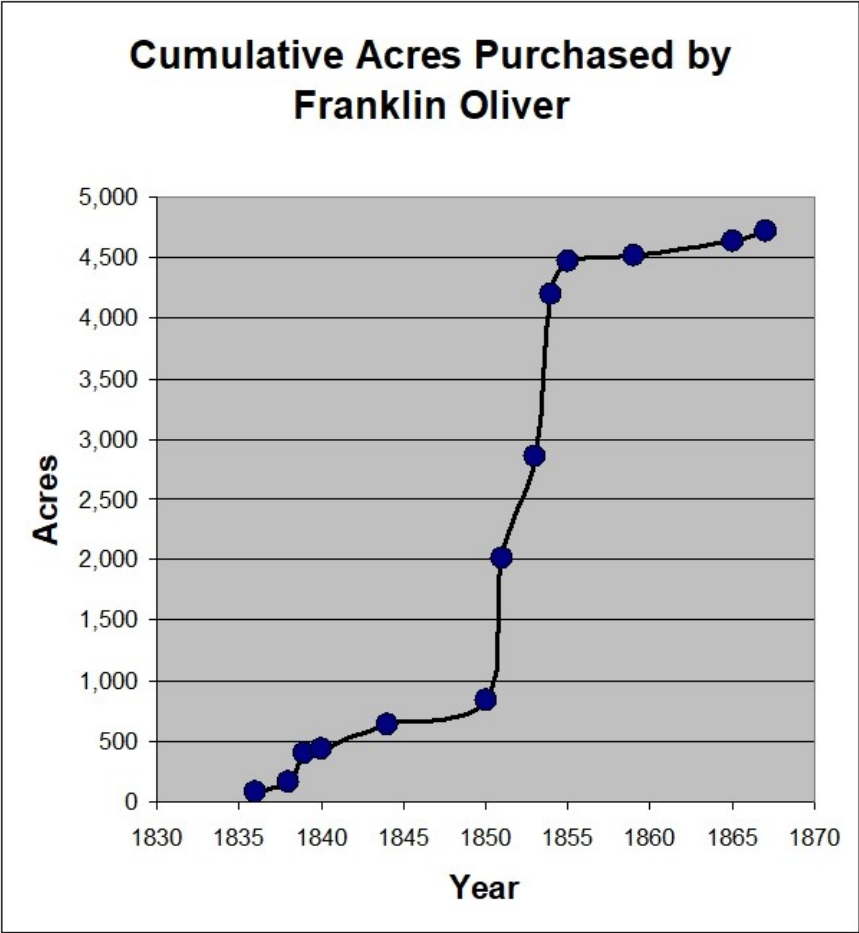
Year	Acres	Military Patent or Cash	County	\$ per Acre	Twp	Range	Section	Legal Description	Source
1836	40	Cash	Livingston	\$1.25	26N	08E	28	E2NW	State
1836	40	Cash	Livingston	\$1.25	26N	08E	28	W2NE	State
1838	80	Cash	Livingston	\$1.25	26N	08E	21	W2NW	State
1839	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	21	E $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1839	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1839	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	E $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1840	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1844	80	Cash	Livingston	\$1.25	26N	08E	21	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1844	80	Cash	Livingston	\$1.25	26N	08E	27	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1844	40	Cash	Livingston	\$1.25	26N	08E	28	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1850	40	Cash	Ford	\$2.50	23N	09E	14	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1850	40	Cash	Ford	\$2.50	23N	09E	14	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1850	102	Cash	Ford	\$2.50	24N	09E	31	NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Lot/Trct 2	Federal
1850	23	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	27N	07E	5	W2LOT2NE	State
1851	80	Military	Ford	\$0.30	23N	09E	10	S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	80	Military	Ford	\$0.30	23N	09E	13	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	80	Military	Ford	\$0.30	23N	09E	13	N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	23N	09E	14	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	80	Military	Ford	\$0.30	23N	09E	14	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	80	Military	Ford	\$0.30	23N	09E	14	N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	23N	09E	15	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	160	Military	Ford	\$0.30	23N	09E	15	SE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	27	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	E $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal
1851	45	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	27N	07E	5	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Lot/Trct 2	Federal
1851	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	27N	07E	32	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	Federal

Year	Acres	Military Patent or Cash	County	\$ per Acre	Twp	Range	Section	Legal Description	Source
1851	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	27N	07E	32	SW¼NE¼	Federal
1853	126	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	5	LOT5NE	State
1853	125	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	5	LOT5NW	State
1853	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	25N	09E	11	SENW	State
1853	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	21	S½NW¼	Federal
1853	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	27	E½SW¼	Federal
1853	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	27	SW¼SW¼	Federal
1853	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	27	SE¼NW¼	Federal
1853	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	N½SW¼	Federal
1853	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	SW¼NW¼	Federal
1853	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	SW¼NE¼	Federal
1853	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	E½NE¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	5	E½NW¼, Lot/Trct 4	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	5	W½NW¼, Lot/Trct 2	Federal
1854	85	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	5	NW¼, Lot/Trct 5	Federal
1854	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	5	W½NW¼, Lot/Trct 4	Federal
1854	125	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	5	NE¼, Lot/Trct 5	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	6	E½NE¼, Lot/Trct 4	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	25N	08E	33	SW¼SW¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	25N	09E	11	SW¼SW¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	25N	09E	11	SW¼NW¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	25N	09E	11	NW¼SW¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	5	W½NW¼, Lot/Trct 3	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	NENE	State
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	SESE	State
1854	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	29	W½SE¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	29	SE¼SW¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	32	NW¼SE¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	32	NE¼NW¼	Federal
1854	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	32	S½NW¼	Federal

Year	Acres	Military Patent or Cash	County	\$ per Acre	Twp	Range	Section	Legal Description	Source
1854	80	Cash	Livingston	\$2.50	26N	08E	32	W½SW¼	Federal
1854	80	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	W½SE¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	SE¼SW¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	33	NW¼NW¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	26N	09E	11	NE¼SE¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	26N	09E	11	SE¼NW¼	Federal
1854	40	Military	Ford	\$0.30	26N	09E	31	SE¼NE¼	Federal
1855	40	Cash	Livingston	\$2.50	25N	08E	6	E½NE¼, Lot/Trct 3	Federal
1855	40	Cash	Ford	\$2.50	25N	09E	11	NW¼SE¼	Federal
1855	40	Cash	Ford	\$2.50	25N	09E	11	SW¼NE¼	Federal
1855	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	29	SW¼SW¼	Federal
1855	40	Cash	Livingston	\$2.50	26N	08E	29	NE¼SE¼	Federal
1855	80	Cash	Livingston	\$2.50	26N	08E	29	N½SW¼	Federal
1859	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	32	NW¼NW¼	Federal
1865	40	Cash	Livingston	\$1.51	26N	08E	29	SESE	State
1865	80	Cash	Livingston	\$1.51	26N	08E	33	E2SE	State
1867	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	NESW	State
1867	40	Military	Livingston	\$0.30	26N	08E	28	NESW	State

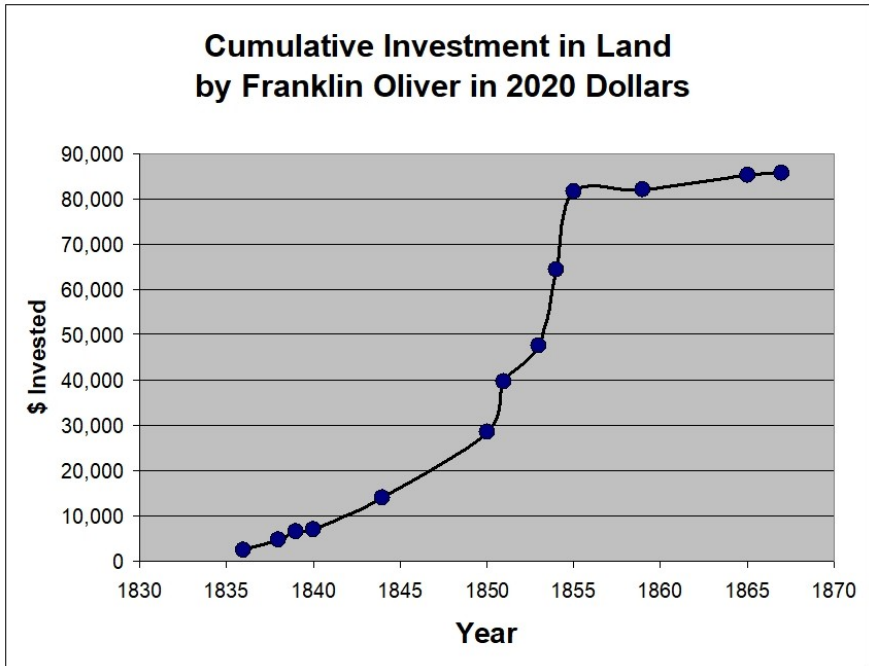
Cumulative Land Purchases by Franklin Oliver's

Using the data above, we can illustrate by year how many total acres Franklin Oliver accumulated.



Cumulative Dollars Invested by Franklin Oliver in Land

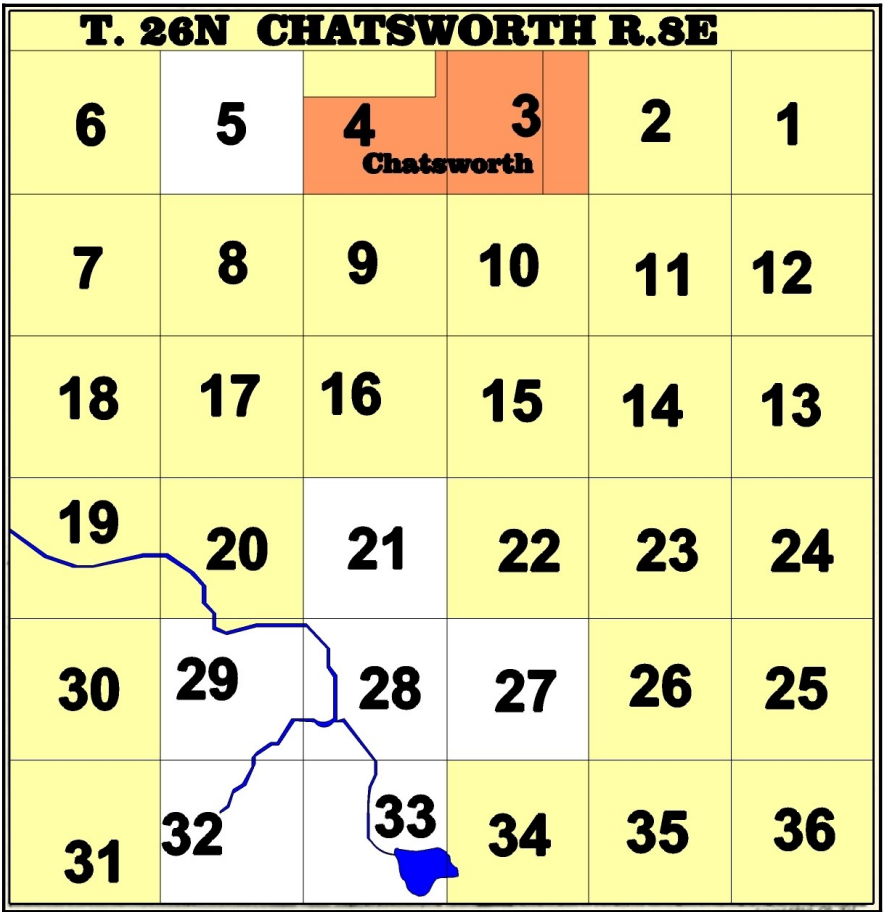
Using this same data, we can illustrate how much money he invested each year in today's dollars.



In the 1840s, very few settlers moved to Central Illinois. The floodgates were opened when Congress passed the 1850 Script Act which granted land to the veterans of the War of 1812. This caused a stampede of new settlers to the area, primarily between 1852 and 1858. Franklin Oliver had to increase his land purchases in this period because it would have been claimed by other settlers. By 1860, most of the farm land in Central Illinois had been settled.

Map of Oliver Purchases in Chatsworth Township's

Franklin Oliver bought most of his land about three miles south of present day Chatsworth and this became known as Oliver’s Grove. The sections in which Oliver purchased land are white in color.



CHAPTER 9

1837 to 1847

The next major event in Livingston County History was the formation of Livingston County in 1837. Pontiac, Illinois, was selected as the County Seat.

The 1878 history book recounts how Livingston County was formed.

The territory which is now Livingston County was, in the first division of the State, a portion of Cook County. After that, it became a portion of Vermilion County, and hence the name of the river which flows through it, which had no other reason for its name, either in the color of its water or its surroundings.

Subsequently, in the organization of those counties, nearly all of it became portions of McLean and LaSalle, though a portion remained attached to Vermilion until this organization.

By act of the Legislature, approved and in force, February 27, 1837, Livingston was created a county with its present boundaries. Its name was suggested by Jesse W. Fell, and was due to the popular esteem in which Edward Livingston was held, in consequence of his being the reputed author of President Jackson's famous proclamation to the South Carolina nullifiers, in their first unsuccessful attempt to disrupt the Union.

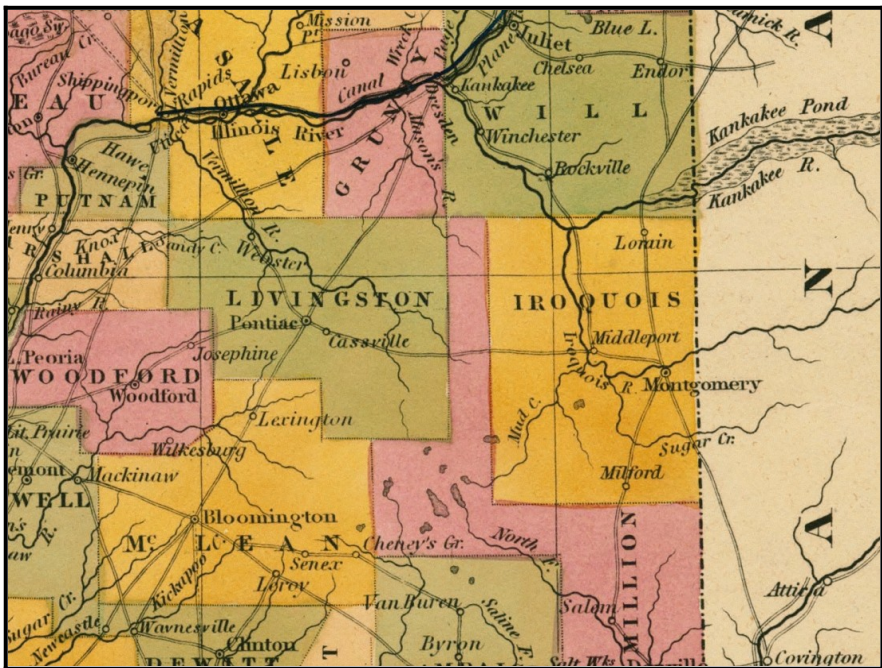
The new county government decided they should have a County Surveyor. Franklin Oliver ran against Isaac Whitaker for this position in the first county election held in 1838. Whitaker gathered 59 votes and Oliver got 41.

1847 Map

This map illustrates there was a road starting at Covington, Indiana, which went north and then went west roughly along the path of U. S. Route 24 today to Pontiac. Middleport was eventually renamed Watseka, Illinois.

Several pioneers to the Fairbury area used this road in the early 1850s to travel from Fountain County, Indiana, to the Fairbury area. Oliver's Grove was likely a stopping point for these early pioneers using this road.

Interestingly, no other mention of the village of Cassville has been found except on this map.



CHAPTER 10

1848

Franklin Oliver married a second time to Miss Sarah Wirtz on April 24, 1848. This marriage is documented by the Illinois Compiled Marriage list available from Ancestry.com.

When Oliver married for the second time, the ages of his family were as shown below.

Franklin Oliver	51
Sarah Wirtz	28
Edward Oliver	29
Helen Oliver	26
Elias Oliver	25
Franklin C. Oliver	21
James Oliver	17

There is a discrepancy regarding the spelling of the last name of Sarah. On the Illinois marriage document, it is spelled Wirtz. In the 1900 history book it is spelled Wert.

Franklin and Sarah Oliver had one child. Her name was Caroline Oliver (1849-1936). Her first husband was Ephraim Hunnicutt and her second husband was Theodore Dorr. No children resulted from either marriage.

1849

Cholera Claims Sister of Franklin Oliver's

The 1878 history book explains the death of Franklin Oliver's sister. She was 59 years old when she died.

And now this brings us to one of the most eventful periods in the history, of the township. This year, 1849, was the "cholera season," and the ravages made in this section were terrible; and, for the number of inhabitants in the settlement, the fatality was greater than almost any locality in the county. Out of a total population of seventy-eight within the limits of the township, thirteen died.

Among the number who perished by the awful scourge were Augustus Fellows and two children. In all, five died at the hotel. When Fellows was stricken down, Dr. Holland, who then resided in Rook's Creek, was called to attend him, was attacked with the disease and lived but a few days.

Ann Oliver, sister of Franklin Oliver, mentioned in Chatsworth Township, was teaching school in Owego, and came in to nurse the Fellows family, and was soon numbered with the dead.

Garret M. Blue, who lived northwest of town, dropped in to see the afflicted family, and while conversing with some of the attendants at the house, felt some of the symptoms of the disease. He hurried out and, mounting his horse, galloped rapidly home, where he arrived with only sufficient strength to crawl to bed, from which he never rose.

In this house, five died—Blue, wife, son, daughter and grandchild. John Blue lived on the farm known in later years as the Miller farm, two miles east of Pontiac. In this family occurred three deaths out of the four members. Blue and wife and one child all perished.

These were truly dark days, and no one but an actual observer can picture the gloom that settled on the little community, or describe the alarm and excitement that prevailed. At times, the number of persons afflicted was greater than the number of those who were well, and much greater than those who were willing or could be induced to wait upon them; and the disposition of the dead was a very serious question. Business of all kinds was stopped. Intercourse with the outer world was entirely cut off, as those having business at this point invariably avoided the route through this part of the county.

CHAPTER 11

1850

First Wife Dies

Franklin Oliver's first wife, Hannah Rockhill, died in 1850 at the age of 50.

Second Marriage Only Lasted Two Years

Franklin Oliver married his second wife, Miss Sarah Wirtz on April 24, 1848. They divorced by 1850. She died in 1855 and was only 35 years of age when she passed away. Daughter Caroline Oliver was only six years old when her mother died.

Third Marriage

Franklin Oliver married for the third time on October 2, 1850. He married Amaretta Smith. She was just 17 years old when she married 63 year old Franklin Oliver.

The 1900 history book has a lot of background on the Amaretta Smith family.

For his third wife he married Amaretta Smith, in 1850, who was born in Oswego county, New York, March 6, 1833. Her father, Luther L. Smith, was born in Westminster, Vermont, and married Amaretta Fellows, who was a daughter of Captain Fellows, of war fame.

His father, Luther Smith, was also born in Vermont, where he married Love Leavitt, of Vermont, whose mother was Love Howard, and whose grandparents achieved fame by coming over in the Mayflower.

Luther L. Smith came to Livingston county when Mrs. Oliver was a small child. He settled on what is known as Smith's Mound, north of Pontiac, and which is the highest elevation in the county.

The maternal grandfather of Mrs. Oliver, Captain Fellows, who served in the Revolutionary war, went into the service as a teamster when very young, and was promoted to a captaincy during the war. His father was Colonel Fellows, who held that title during the Revolutionary war. Captain Fellows married Miss Anna Grant, of Old Hartford, Connecticut, relative of General Grant.

Adelia Smith, a sister of Mrs. Oliver, was the first lady teacher in Pontiac, teaching school in the old court house. She was a very talented lady, and the belle of Livingston county. She is now the wife of Horace Scripture, of Oswego, New York. Adaline Smith, who died young, was also a school teacher and a minister in the Methodist church. She was a fine public speaker. Jerome B. Smith lives on the old homestead on Smith's Mound, where he owns about six hundred acres of well improved land. Solomon J. Smith is now living retired near Chicago. Niles was a soldier in the civil war, and served until the end. He later went to Oklahoma where he died in 1895.

Franklin Oliver and Amaretta Smith had three children.

Revilo Oliver Sr.	1853-1929
John Lewis Oliver	1858-1916
Florence F. Oliver	1873-1943

The 1900 history book has biographies of all three children.

To Franklin and Amaretta Oliver were born three children: Revilo, John L. and Florence. Revilo, ex-mayor of Chatsworth, the famous song composer, author of "Soldiers of the Maine," the great Spanish-American war song; "The Hero of Manila," the famous Dewey song; "Nineteen Hundred Years Ago," a Christmas song and chorus relating to the Savior of the world; "The Volunteers," a war song and chorus, representing the largest army in the world, and other beautiful songs and poems.

He has the distinction of being both an author and inventor, a characteristic seldom found in one person. He inherits his Christian and poetic nature from his mother, who is a noble, Christian woman, and a great financier.

His family consists of his mother and his little niece. Miss Gertie Ross, whose photograph appears in this work. She is a bright little girl of considerable oratorical ability, to whom the poet is very much attached.

He also has the distinction of being the first and only person in the world who bears the name of Revilo, which is considered by many to be the sweetest and prettiest name known to the English language, being a new name originating with his father, from whom he inherits his mechanical ingenuity.

One thing that makes him locally famous is the peculiarity of his name. Revilo, when read backwards spells Oliver, and Oliver when read backwards spells Revilo.

He is a natural orator and a good judge of law and equity, and like most all poets, he is endowed with a

genial, kindhearted and sympathetic nature, but when thoroughly aroused by injustice he is unyielding and of a warlike disposition. He is styled Revilo, the Christian poet, because there is something about his compositions that reminds one of the other world. His songs and poems are sad, but beautiful. They have a sublimity of thought and a tenderness of feeling that touches the heart of everyone.

John L., who is residing on part of the home farm, is a successful agriculturist and raiser of blooded stock, is married, and has five children—Ralph, Daisy, Arthur, Orville and Oma.

Florence is the wife of Thomas Ross, and they now reside in Lake Village, Indiana. He is a farmer, and also a horse trainer and track driver. They have four children—Gertie, Charles, Joseph R. and Murrell D. The first named makes her home with her uncle, Revilo and her grandmother Oliver, and is a bright and talented young elocutionist.

Photographs of Revilo Oliver and Gertie Ross

The 1900 history book has photographs of both Revilo Oliver and young Gertie Ross.



REVILO OLIVER.



MISS GERTIE ROSS.

The Author's Little Niece.

Poem by Revilo Oliver

The 1900 history book also printed one of Revilo Oliver's poems.

WHAT IS LIFE?

Life is a narrow vale between the new
 and the old,
A narrow path between two mountains
 hold,
In vain we try to look beyond those
 peaks so high.
Still we see nothing but the varied blue
 in the sky;
Tho' we weep aloud with anguish
 and care,
Our voice is lost on the empty air.
And the only answer we receive as
 the years roll by,
Is the resounding echo of our wailing
 cry;
But love and hope see a star, and
 listening can hear
The rustle of angel's wings as their
 shadowy forms draw near.
We are humble mortals born of hopes
 and fears,
And our path through life is strewn
 with smiles and tears.
Of all there is in life of sad griefs and
 joys bright,
There is not much between the happy
 morn of birth and death's sad night.

We march on through life ever veiled
 in mystery and dread,
For there comes no answer from the
 voiceless lips of the dead.
Tho' the stars may look down upon us
 with compassion and love,
From their far away places in the blue
 heavens above,
Tho' learned in art and science as
 taught here below.
We can never tell in what channels
 our lives will flow.
Tho' we cry aloud in our vain efforts
 the future to learn,
No answer will ever — no never — return;
Tho' the heavens for information
 we eagerly scan,
We never can tell the true destiny of
 man.

Revilo

Photo of Florence Oliver – Ross

The Chatsworth Library has a photograph labeled “Florence Ross” and a copy is shown below.



Revilo Oliver Sr. Family

In 1897, Revilo Oliver Sr. married Mrs. Maude Barlow of Bloomington. The marriage only lasted one week.

In 1907, Revilo Oliver Sr., at the age of 54, married 29 year-old Flora R. Lang (1878-1960). They had one son, Revilo Pendleton Oliver, born in 1908.

Revilo P. Oliver went on to become a Professor at the University of Illinois in humanities. Professor Oliver married Alice Grace Needham (1902-1997). They had no children.

In 1929, at the age of 75, Revilo Oliver Sr. committed suicide by hanging himself in the basement of his Springfield, Illinois, home. At the time of his death, his wife, Flora Oliver, was 51 years old. His son, Revilo P. Oliver, was 21 years of age.

The March 19, 1929, issue of the Murphysboro newspaper published the story shown below.

Probe Aged Man's Death

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. —Coroner Ernest Dye today, was conducting an inquest into the death of Revilo Oliver, about 76, whose body was found hanging in the basement of his home here Saturday, Oliver, apparently a suicide, left a note saying that his troubles were over. Despondency is believed to have caused the act.

The March 29, 1929, issue of the Freeport Journal Standard, Freeport, Illinois, published the obituary shown below.

SUICIDE MAY END LITIGATION THAT HAS KEPT COURTS BUSY FOR HALF CENTURY

At One Time Litigants Were Among Richest Residents of State

Pontiac, Ill., March 29.

With the suicide by hanging at Springfield of Revilo Oliver, perhaps the last chapter has been written in land litigation which has figured in the central Illinois courts for upwards of a half century. Oliver was the son of Franklin and Amaretta Oliver pioneer residents of Chatsworth. In the early days, and before the litigious habit started, the Oliver's owned thousands of acres of land and ranked with the wealthiest residents of Central Illinois. The family differences over ownership of the father's land, kept the lawyers and courts busy in the effort to adjudge property, the rightful heirs to the land. In 1908 the mother died and the will was probated in Texas. Several years later a will was mailed to the son, Revilo, which he submitted to the county judge and which differed radically from that of the original will previously passed on by the courts.

The authenticity of the second will was disputed and this started a new chain of litigation in the courts of both McLean and Livingston county, changes of venue being allowed. The case on the appeal is now before the state supreme court.

With the death of the son it may be decided to dismiss the action pending in the state tribunal.

The John Lewis Oliver Family

John Lewis Oliver (1858-1916) married Mary E. Sealock (1864-1922). They had five children.

The first child of John L. and Mary Oliver was Ralph Elmer Oliver (1882-1935). He married Emma Lenore Seymer (1882-1930). They had no children and both are buried in Portland, Oregon.

The second child of John L. and Mary Oliver was Daisy Gertrude Oliver (1884-1960). She married Clarence C. West (1873-1956). They had two children which included Zetah A. West (1914-1991) and John Oliver West (1922-1956).

The third child of John L. and Mary Oliver was Arthur Oliver (1888-1980). He married Kittie Jane Rice (1900-1969). They had two children which included Lathressa L. Oliver (1917-1993) and Arthur Leroy Oliver (1920-1947).

The fourth child of John L. and Mary Oliver was Orville Orvan Oliver (1895-1959). He married Luella C. Glabe (1895-1985). They had no children.

The fifth child of John L. and Mary Oliver was Oma Rosemond Oliver (1898-1994). She married Felix Lynn Bowman (1891-1957). They had three children including Anna Lee Bowman (1919-2013), Mary G. Bowman (1922-2014), and Oliver Lynn Bowman (1926-2013).

The Florence Florida Oliver Family

Florence F. Oliver (1873-1943) married Thomas R. Ross (1866-1939). They had six children. When Florence F. Oliver died in 1943, she was the last surviving child of the nine children that Franklin Oliver fathered.

The first child of Thomas and Florence Ross was Gertrude Ross (1889-1949). Florence was just 16 years old when Gertrude was born. Gertrude married Mahlon R. Hess Jr. (1887-1949) and they had two children which included Ross V. Hess (1911-1911) and Mahlon Hess (1931-1973). Ross V. Hess died at just six months of age.

The second child of Thomas and Florence Ross was Charlie Ross (1891-1949). He married Ivy Jane Poisel (1891-1959). They had five children.

Bernice Ross	1916-
Howard E. Ross	1917-1985
Charles A. Ross Jr.	1920-2006
Ernest A. Ross	1926-2008
Franklin A. Ross	1930-2000

The third child of Thomas and Florence Ross was Joseph Revilo Ross (1895-1985). He married Mamie Lois Davis (1897-1971). They had one child named Malcolm D. Ross (1919-1985).

The fourth child of Thomas and Florence Ross was Dorothy Muriel Ross (1897-1971). She married Harry Arthur Anderson (1889-1966). They had no children,

The fifth child of Thomas and Florence Ross was Ruby Ellen Ross (1902-2000). She married Almond R. Copley (1903-1977). Their only child was Patricia E. Copley (1927-2014).

The sixth child of Thomas and Florence Ross was Thomas W. Ross (1908-1985). He married Elsie Mae Hively (1909-1995). Thomas and Elsie Ross had three children.

Marilyn Ann Ross	1932-2017
Thomas R. Ross	1936-1997
Ronald G. Ross	1944-1945

Thomas W. Ross then married Dorothy Jordan. Thomas and Dorothy Ross had two children.

Jeffery S. Ross	Unknown
Debbie Ross	1956-2012

CHAPTER 12

1851

Surveying Work

Congress passed a new law which awarded land to veterans of the War of 1812. Many of these veterans had no interest in moving to the swamp lands of Illinois. These veterans sold their land patents for about 10 cents on the dollar compared to the \$2.50 per acre official federal government price. This new law triggered a boom of new farmers moving into Central Illinois.

Many new small towns were established with the hopes that a new railroad would be run through their town. If the railroad chose not to go through these small towns, they quickly became ghost towns.

Since Franklin Oliver was a surveyor, he was kept busy surveying land for new farmers and the new little villages being established. The 1878 history book recounts some of the surveying projects that Franklin Oliver undertook.

In 1851, Oliver laid out the new village of Richmond, two miles east of Pontiac. Unfortunately, the railroad never came to this town and it faded into a ghost town.

Also in 1851, Oliver laid out the new village of Reading.

CHAPTER 13

1856

The 1884 Ford County history book recounts that the trees at Oliver's Grove were consumed by a massive fire in 1856.

On or about the 1st of September, 1856, a prairie fire was started in the south part of what is now known as Ford County, and the wind being from the south drove the fire over the country at a frightful speed, burning all the prairie lying west of the Illinois Central Railroad track to what was known as Indian Timber, and as far north as the Kankakee River before it could be stopped.

As I said, the season was very dry, and the low sloughs that grew a very fair quality of grass that year, continued to burn for fully three months, or until the ground froze up in the fall. The lands that were so badly burnt still show the effects of the fire. Some of these places came directly under the writer's observation, and were he in the northern part of the county now, he could show places in swamps on the north half of Section 7, south half of Section 6, in Township 25 north, Range 9 east, and in a small slough in the south half of south west quarter of Section 21, Township 26.north, also in sloughs, that lie south and west of Oliver's Grove, and near what was called Corn Grove, which before the fire were smooth, even sloughs, but are now ponds and lakes of water.

The cause of this is that the tall grass, that at that time grew in the sloughs, took fire, and having so much body, burnt into the ground in such a manner that it settled into basins. Among these may be mentioned Turtle Pond, lying south of Oliver's Grove, and Corn Grove Pond, lying west of Turtle Pond.

The timber in Oliver's Grove, especially the down timber, was nearly all destroyed, and it was considered that the loss in wood that Mr. Oliver sustained must have run into the thousands of cords. Going further north to what is now known as the Vermilion Swamp, the effects of the fire may still be found. Before the fire, all that country from the county line of Ford and Iroquois Counties, in Township 28 north, Ranges 9 and 10 east, was a large slough, which grew coarse but good grass, not canebrake, as it does now.

In this place the fire burnt holes in the ground fully three feet deep and for several years after no grass or anything green grew there.

Before the fire, large herds of deer could be seen grazing quietly on the prairies, but these beautiful animals were now driven to other localities, and deer meat was scarce.

CHAPTER 14

1858

Prior to 1858, Livingston County was divided into voting precincts, which were, from time to time, changed in location and number to suit the convenience of the inhabitants. In 1858, the Township Organization Act was adopted.

According to the 1878 history book, originally, Chatsworth embraced Forrest and Germantown, and was known at Oliver's Grove Township.

The first township meeting was held at the house of Franklin Oliver on the 6th of April, 1858, and officers elected for the year for the "Town of Oliver's Grove." The first election resulted as follows: James G. Meredith, Supervisor; W. H. Jones and J. G. Harper, Justices of the Peace; C. Hart and B. Harbert, Constables; John Towner, Assessor; J. B. Snyder, Collector, and Charles Cranford, Town Clerk.

Many of the citizens disliked the compound name and petitioned the Board of Supervisors to change the name in 1860, two years after the Township Organization Act.

William H. Jones, who was the supervisor at the time, gave it the name of Chatsworth, which it has ever since borne. The name is said to have been taken from an English story he had read, in which "Lord Chatsworth" figures as a principal character.

At the meeting of the Board of Supervisors in 1861, Forrest, on petition, was set off, and became a separate and distinct township. At the September meeting of Supervisors for 1867, Germantown petitioned for separation, and was set off at this meeting, since which time it has been a separate town.

At the time of the formation of Livingston County, Saunemin, Sullivan, Pleasant Ridge and Charlotte Townships were comprised in one election precinct, and it so stood until the second year after township organization, when Pleasant Ridge and Charlotte were struck off.

When all four of these towns were embraced in one, it was called Saunemin, after the old sachem of the Kickapoo Indians, and was given to the precinct by Oliver, of the present township of Chatsworth, who settled there when Indians were plenty in the country, and knew the old chief well.

CHAPTER 15

1860

The 1888 Livingston County history book has a biography of Mr. Wienand. It has an interesting description of what it was like to live near Oliver's Grove in 1860.

Mr. Wienand continued in Panola until the spring of 1860. In the meantime he was married, March 8, 1858, to Miss Wilhelmina Cook, one of his own countrywomen, born in the Province of Mecklenburg,, October 1, 1834.

Two years after his marriage, Mr. Wienand invested a part of his surplus funds in forty acres of partly improved land near Oliver Grove, this county, to which he removed after putting up a small house and otherwise making things comfortable for his family.

It was a wild section, although near the town, and infested with rattlesnakes, of which he killed thirty-two in the space of three weeks. He soon tired of this kind of farming and traded the property for a store building in Chatsworth, where he opened a harness shop and worked at his trade two years.

CHAPTER 16

1865

The Civil War essentially ended on April 9, 1865, when General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse.

Alma Lewis James, in her 1967 version of her Stuffed Clubs book, noted there was a Pony Express operation until the end of the Civil War.

John Coomer was proud of his distinction of having built the first new house in Fairbury, and he had started the first lumber yard. He served as the first postmaster until the Federal Government formally appointed one for the new town.

While he held the position, Fairbury was on the pony express route from Danville to Ottawa, along with Pontiac, Avoca, and Oliver's Grove. The Fairbury section was from Pontiac to Lexington, and a round-trip was made each week. There was very little postal business because of the heavy rates charged, and the post boy was correspondingly underpaid. He rode a fast horse, and he tooted a shrill horn as he entered the village, which was a summons for Mr. Coomer to run out with the mail bag. This pony express was abandoned at the end of the Civil War when there were enough railroads to take over the business of carrying the mail.



CHAPTER 17

1867

Franklin Oliver had a massive farm with 4,711 acres that he purchased from the U.S. Government. Oliver's farm was dwarfed in size by Michael Sullivant's 40,000 acre operation just a few miles south and west of Oliver's Grove. A 2019 Fairbury Blade newspaper article written by Dale C. Maley recounts the massive 40,000 acre operation of Mr. Sullivant.

Largest Farm in the United States

Lucas Sullivant was born in 1765 in Virginia. He married Sarah Starling, also from Virginia. They moved to Columbus, Ohio, and were some of the earliest settlers in that area. Lucas Sullivant accumulated a vast amount of farmland. One of the three sons of Lucas and Sarah was Michael Lucas Sullivant. M. L. Sullivant was born in 1807 in Columbus, Ohio. Michael was educated at Ohio University, and Centre College, Kentucky. At an early age, he exhibited a great interest in agricultural affairs.

Michael's father died in 1823. After he finished college, Michael settled upon the farm estate he had inherited from his father. He became a stock-grower and grazer. He helped to organize the Ohio State Board of Agriculture.

In October of 1852, Michael first visited Illinois. He decided the fertile prairie lands had great potential as productive farmland. Within four years, Mr. Sullivant purchased about 80,000 acres in the counties of Champaign, Ford, and Livingston. He bought most of this land from the federal government for \$1.50 per acre. Michael also borrowed from East Coast banks to

have enough money to start improving the raw prairie lands.

In 1855, he began his first improvement in Illinois at his Broadlands farm in Champaign County. Michael was 48 years old when he started farming in Champaign. In 1861, he and his family moved from Columbus, Ohio, to Champaign, Illinois. In 1866, Michael experienced business problems. He sold the remainder of his Ohio land. He also sold the 23,000 acre Broadlands farm in Champaign to Mr. Alexander for \$250,000. This amount would be equivalent to \$4.3 million in today's dollars. He and his family moved to his 40,000 acre Burr Oaks farm in Ford County in 1867.

M. L. Sullivant was 60 years old when he started to transform the virgin prairie at Burr Oaks to a productive corn farm. In 1868, he was able to break the prairie and plant 1,000 acres of corn. The next year, he converted another 5,000 acres of virgin land to cornfields.

By 1870, the Burr Oak farm attracted national attention as the largest farm in the United States. Harper's Weekly magazine published a fascinating story about how farming was performed on the vast 40,000-acre farm in Central Illinois.

By the time the September 23, 1871, Harper's Weekly article was written, Mr. Sullivant had 11,000 acres of corn growing at Burr Oak. The average yield at that time was 45 bushels to the acre. Besides the cornfields, Mr. Sullivant had 5,000 acres of other crops under cultivation.

The reporter struggled with how to give the magazine readers an idea of the vastness of green oceans of corn grown at Burr Oak. The reporter decided to calculate how big of a corn crib would be required to hold the harvest. He estimated it would take a continuous corn

crib that was 12 feet wide, eight feet tall, and five miles in length. This theoretical corn crib would hold 495,000 bushels of ear corn.

Mr. Sullivant first had to break the prairie with its natural vegetation. Teams of oxen were used to pull a breaking plow. This plow cut a furrow twenty inches in width. The primary purpose of this first pass was to turn over the sod and leave a furrow about three inches in depth. This ground was often immediately planted in corn. The first year's harvest would only be about 20 bushels per acre. If there were time to follow the breaking plow with a stirring-plow, the first year's corn crop would increase to 45 bushels per acre. Every bushel of corn saved from the harvest was used to plant eight acres of corn the next season.

Most of the farmland in Central Illinois was wet and swampy. In the 1870s, Mr. Sullivant built drainage ditches in his fields to help remove the excess water. He used a ditching plow that was about 18 feet in length. It had a plowshare that was 11 feet wide and took 68 oxen and eight men to operate it. This work crew could finish three and a half miles of new ditch each day of work.

The machinery used at Burr Oak would handsomely stock two or three agricultural implement stores. This machinery included 150 steel plows, 75 breaking plows, 142 cultivators, 45 corn planters, and 25 gang-harrows. Five blacksmiths were employed to shoe the horses and repair the farm equipment.

The only alcohol allowed at Burr Oak was whiskey used to treat snake bites. Mr. Sullivant was doubtful whether the whiskey would not injure the man more than the snake bite.

Mr. Sullivant organized his 40,000 acre Burr Oak farm similar to a military command structure. He was the

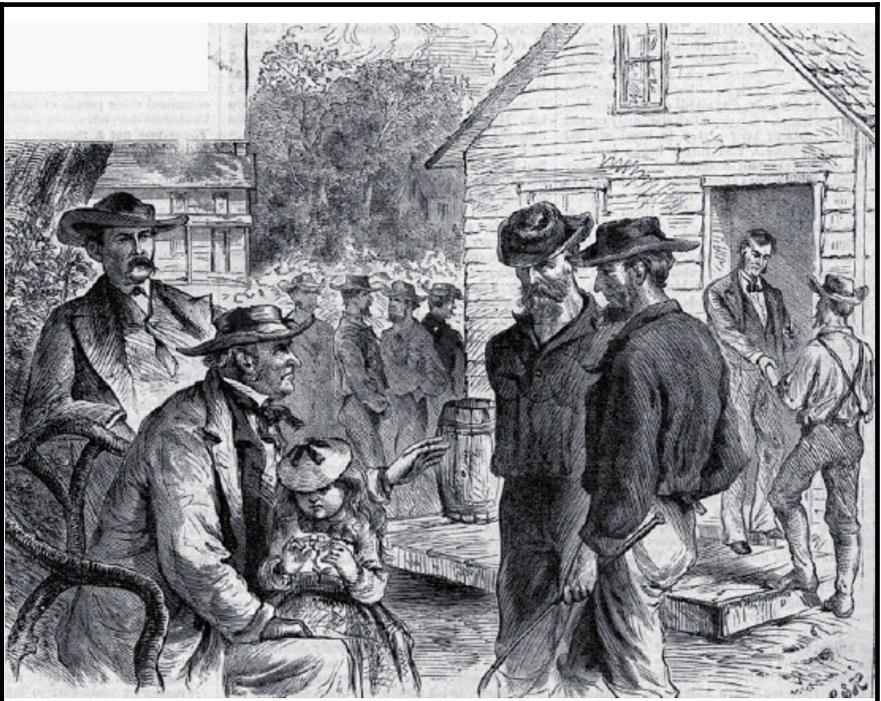
commander-in-chief. Mr. J. M. Miner was his brigadier general. Next in the organization were twelve captains, each with three lieutenants. Each lieutenant had charge of a squad of men. A total of 250 men were employed at Burr Oak farm.

Just as Mr. Sullivant was getting his huge farm operating efficiently, he encountered some massive financial headwinds. The first problem was the Panic of 1873. This panic was a financial crisis that triggered a worldwide economic depression. In addition to the Panic of 1873, Burr Oak farm experienced three bad harvest years in a row. Mr. Sullivant was unable to make the interest payments due to his lenders.

Then Mr. Sullivant became gravely ill in early 1878. A public sale of all his property was held. Mr. Hiram Sibley, of Rochester, NY., was his largest creditor, and by this sale became the possessor of 17,641 acres of Burr Oaks Farm. The Equitable Trust Company and others took the balance of the estate, comprising 14,000 acres. Mr. Sullivant died in January of 1879. Sibley, Illinois, is named after Hiram Sibley.

When Burr Oak farm started to shut down, approximately 100 black men lost their jobs. Most of them moved to nearby Fairbury. After Mr. Sullivant's death, his widow often visited the wife of John J. Taylor in Fairbury. Mr. Taylor was a prominent Fairbury banker.

In 1871, at the age of 64, Michael Sullivant was nationally renowned as the owner and manager of one of the largest farms in the United States. In the next eight years, he would lose his entire 40,000-acre farm, become gravely ill, and die.



Mr. Sullivan and His Captains at Evening Meeting in 1871

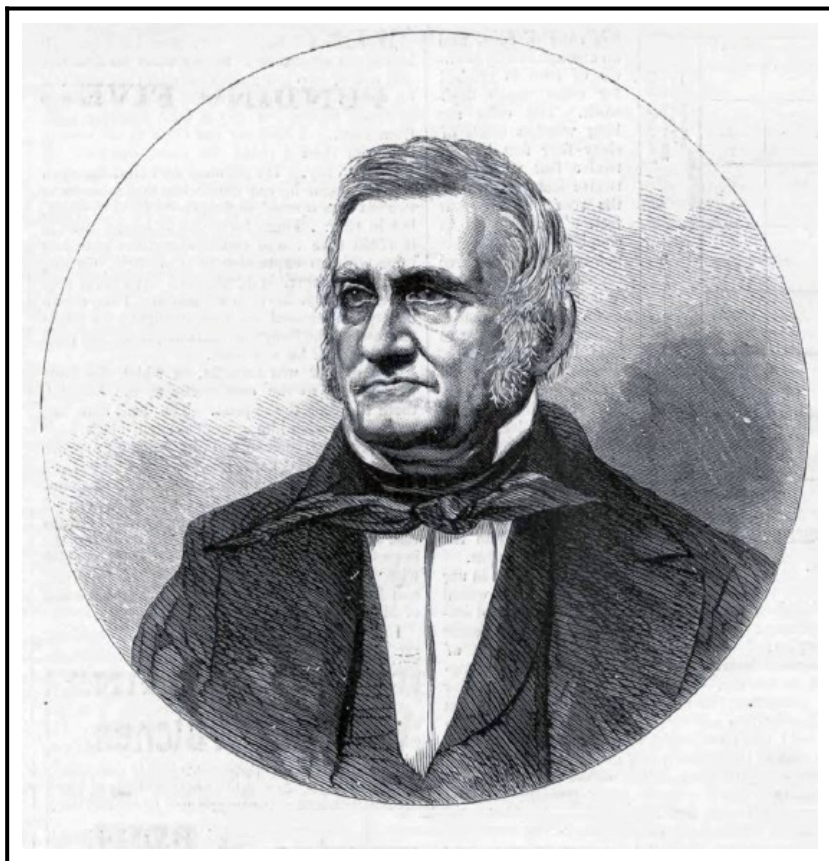


Image of Mr. Sullivan from 1871 Harper's Weekly magazine article

Oliver and Sullivant Crossed Paths

In retrospect, it would seem inevitable that the two largest landowners in the region would cross paths. Mr. Sullivant arrived in 1867 and died 12 years later in 1879.

A December 31, 1940, Pantagraph article recounts the relationship between the two men.

Even with all his property, Sullivant wasn't satisfied. It seems a neighbor of his, Franklin Oliver, owned a 4,500 acre tract that Sullivant wanted. Five foot Franklin Oliver, who settled on this land in 1832, living there with the Kickapoo Indians, haggled for years with six footer Sullivant over the purchase price.

Both men banked in Gilman, where bankers reported they came to within \$100 of agreeing on the price. What finally quashed the deal was Sullivant's statement to Oliver that he intended making the land into a hog lot.

CHAPTER 18

1875

In 1875, Franklin Oliver was 88 years old. Many of the first pioneers of Livingston County had begun to die off.

According to the 1878 Livingston County history book, local citizens decided to form an Old Settlers' Association. Franklin Oliver is mentioned in the poem that was written in honor of their first meeting.

Old Settlers' Association

In the year 1875, when the new Court House was completed, it was determined by the old settlers throughout the county that a grand re-union should be held and the new building dedicated. A preliminary meeting was called at the fair grounds early in the Fall of the year, at which C. B. Ostrander presided and John A. Fellows was appointed Secretary.

The 30th of December was the day fixed upon for the re-union, and committees of arrangements were appointed in every township in the county. On the day appointed, the old settlers turned out en masse. Tables, capable of seating fifteen hundred people, had been prepared by the citizens of Pontiac, and these were all filled. James McDowell was the President of the day, and John Fellows, Secretary. An address of welcome was delivered by Nathaniel J. Pillsbury. Letters were read from Judge Treat, who held the first term of court in Pontiac and from Hon. David Davis and Jesse W. Fell. O. F. Pearre, who had been requested to furnish a poem for the occasion, read the following poem.

ADDRESS TO THE OLD SETTLERS OF LIVINGSTON

One hundred years ago today,
The British troops in Boston lay;
Our sires then hardly thought that they
Would found a Nation
Whose ships would whiten many seas,
Whose flag should float on every breeze,
Whose armies could maintain with ease
Her lofty station.

And in that hundred years ago,
The deer, the wolf, the buffalo,
At will went roaming to and fro
Where now our county
Spreads out one vast and fertile plain
Of golden corn and waving grain,
Rejoicing 'neath a constant rain
Of Heaven's bounty.

Yea, men now sitting in this hall
In mem'ry can the time recall
When nature brooded over all;
When was unbroken
The solitude that wrapped the land
Where now our smiling cities stand,
When silence reigned on every hand
And gave no token.

Save by the hooting of the owl,
The clanger of the water fowl,
The red deer's signal or the howl
Of gray wolf, weary
In searching for his scanty food,
Save where, perhaps, some cabin rude
Seemed on the lonely scene to brood,
And served to point the solitude
So lone and dreary.

Oliver, Cummings, these can tell,
Wilson, McDowell and Darnell;
John Johnson knows the story well,
The quaint old story;
How Chief Shabbona and his band
Kindled their camp fires on the strand
Of fair Vermilion, when the land
Stood robed by virgin Nature's hand
In pristine glory.

Peace to thy shade; Shabbona, rest:
A warm, true heart beat in thy breast;
The white man's friend you stood confessed,
Among the bravest, truest, best
Of those we mention.
Thy name deserves a worthy place,
Brave chieftain of a warlike race,
Hist'ry accords thee little space;
I would more worthy pen could trace,
Thy fame, and, with befitting grace.
Thy virtues mention.

But, ah what mighty change has passed
Since the brave Chief Shabbona last
Upon the stage his vision cast.
What grandeur looming.

Is this through which Vermilion flows
From early morn to evening's close;
Through towns and farms the trav'ler goes,
Where fifty thousand souls repose;
The desert blossoms like the Rose
Of Sharon blooming.

Not Homer in his valiant crew
Could mention more good men and true;
McMillen, Breckenridge and Blue,
McDowell and Tuttle, Campbell, too,

And other worthies not a few.
Ye pioneers, it is to you
The debut of gratitude is due;
Ye builded wiser than ye knew
The broad foundation
On which our superstructure stands;
Your strong right arms and willing hands,
Your earnest effort still commands
Our veneration.

And you, who yet upon the shore
Of Time remain, strike hands once more,
To-day recount your trials o'er.
Repeat to us, from out your store,
The legions and the early lore.
Repeating
The name of Rummary, he who found
That famous railroad under ground;
Then pass the name of Corey round,
Cornell and Sprague, their praises sound;
Ladd, Dehner, Fellows, Fyfe, profound
On finance, Spafford, such names sound
In greeting.

We point to you, old friends, and say
The heat and burden of the day
You bore, and in an earnest way
We meet you,
Well pleased, indeed, to see you stand
On this glad day, a gallant band
Whose hands have wrought, whose brains have planned
Such vast improvements in the land;
With beating heart and open hand,
We greet you!

CHAPTER 19

1876

Family Altercation

The April 29, 1876 Chatsworth Plaindealer published a story about an altercation which took place between 89 year-old Franklin Oliver and his 41year-old daughter in law, Ellen Oliver.

Our citizens of leisure were interested in a law suit at the office of Squire Sears, on Thursday. The Oliver family were the interested and interesting parties. The old man Oliver seemed to be the most attractive object on the occasion. His long white hair was a matted clot of blood, which had been induced to leave its usual course in the veins by the impulse given to a club in the hands of Mrs. Franklin Oliver Jr.

There were other marks of affection (?) on his face, which might have been intended for "love taps," very forcibly impressed. Mrs. Frank Oliver, Jr., also exhibited some marks showing that she had received some impressions lasting in their nature, if they were not charming.

The fuss occurred at the Oliver Mansion, at the grove, on Wednesday evening. For particulars, apply at Squire Curran's office about the eighth of next month, the time to which the suit was continued.

Photograph of Franklin Oliver

The first Fairbury Fair was held in the summer of 1876. The Old Settlers Association met and had a group photo taken at the fair. This photo was reprinted in the September 4, 1925 edition of the Fairbury Blade newspaper..

The Fairbury Echoes Museum still has the original 1925 newspaper in which this photo appeared. A digital camera was used to photograph the 96 year-old newspaper and the result is shown below.



Most historical accounts state that Franklin Oliver was five feet zero inches in height. This height appears to be about right when you compare his height to other men and women in the group photo.

1876 Map of Livingston County

The 1876 book titled *Atlas of the State of Illinois* by Warner & Beers has a map of Livingston County. The portion showing the southeast portion of the county is shown below.

His legal disputes began in 1876 per this May 20, 1876, Daily Inter-Ocean newspaper story.

DIVORCE IN OLD AGE

An Old Man Apprehensive of Losing Control of His Property

Pontiac, Ill., May 19.—Franklin Oliver, now 89 years old, probably the oldest resident of this county, if not the State, filed a bill of divorce in the Circuit Court of Livingston County against A. Oliver, his wife. Mr. Oliver being a man of large property and most eccentric habits, the case elicited much comment. Mrs. Oliver filed a cross-bill, at which stage of the proceedings Mr. Oliver filed a cross-bill. Mr. Oliver then made overtures to his wife to return.

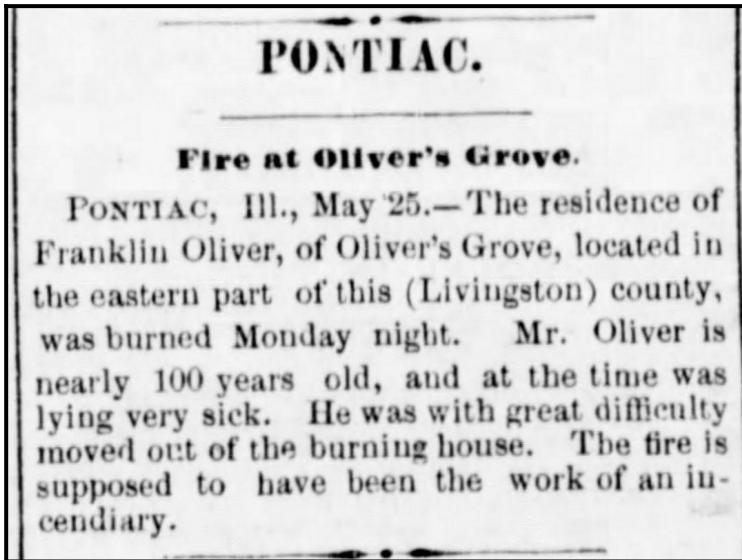
The case came up this morning on behalf of Mrs. Oliver, who now applies for alimony and money to prosecute her case. Mr. Oliver appeared in court, with his white locks falling down his back, and, in a sharp voice, begged the Court not to impose any barrier between himself and wife. Judge Pillsbury awarded Mrs. Oliver \$40 a month of temporary alimony, with the advice that, if possible, they make an amicable adjustment of the unfortunate difficulty.

Mr. Oliver also stated that steps were being taken to deprive him of the control of his large property and place it in the hands of Trustees. The estate is valued at \$150,000, and in part consists of 3,000 acres of land in this county, known as Oliver's Grove. The Hon. L. E. Payson appears for Mrs. Oliver, and Messrs. Dubar and Torrance for Mr. Oliver.

CHAPTER 20

1877

The May 26, 1877, issue of the Pantagraph had this article about Franklin Oliver's home burning down.



When this devastating fire occurred, Franklin Oliver was 90 years old. The ages of his third wife and children are shown below.

Amaretta Oliver	44
Revilo Oliver Sr.	24
John Lewis Oliver	4

One interesting question that arises today about this fire was what happened to the Benjamin Franklin portrait? The 1900 Livingston County history book recounts that the portrait must have survived the fire because it was still in the family possession in 1900.

John Oliver, the father of Franklin Oliver, was born and educated in Dublin, Ireland. He emigrated to this country sometime prior to the Revolutionary war, in which he served as quartermaster-general.

He was a warm friend of Benjamin Franklin, who at one time gave him a portrait of himself, being one of only three that were ever made. It was painted by Francis Hopkins, [misspelling of Hopkinson] one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The family yet have that portrait in their possession, and it goes without question to say that it is highly prized. John Oliver was the pioneer of the Oliver family who settled in Bordentown, New Jersey.

Errors in the 1900 History Book

Besides the misspelling of Hopkinson, the statement given to the history book author that only three portraits of Benjamin Franklin were made is incorrect.

During his lifetime, Benjamin Franklin set for a total of eight portraits. A list of the eight portraits can be found at the National Portrait Gallery web site at <https://tinyurl.com/e9hz35nn>.

CHAPTER 21

1878

A curious newspaper story was found in the October 23, 1878 edition of the Daily Illinois State Journal of Springfield, Illinois. Franklin Oliver was 91 years old when he gave this interview to the reporter. His family had filed suit with the court to have him judged incompetent and to have his extensive land holdings placed in conservatorship with the family as trustees.

THE OLD SETTLER—Mr. Franklin Oliver, of Oliver's Grove, Livingston County, was in the city yesterday, and dined at the Revere. Mr. Oliver is perhaps the oldest citizen of central Illinois, having settled upon the farm which he now owns in May, 1826.

He was born at Boydentown, New Jersey, May 20, 1786, and resided in that state until 1819, when he removed to New Orleans, where he remained until 1823, when he went to St. Louis, and from thence to Kaskaskia, where he remained three years. Mr. Oliver is in the enjoyment of excellent health, and bids fair to live for many years to come.

This story is full of errors. It is unknown if the errors are due to mental incompetence of Franklin or sloppy reporting, or a combination of the two factors.

The first error is that it was well established in the 1878 history book that Oliver arrived in Illinois in 1832, not 1826.

The second error is that he was born in Bordentown, not Boydentown, New Jersey.

There is no other known reference material which supports that he traveled from Bordentown, to New Orleans, to St. Louis, to Kaskaskia, then to the Chatsworth area.

Franklin Oliver married Hannah Rockhill in 1818 in Bordentown. Their children were born in 1819, 1822, 1823, 1827, and 1831 in Bordentown. If Franklin Oliver made all these travels, he would have had to leave a young wife and infant children back at Bordentown while he traveled.

William Fugate Biography

Several references state that Franklin Oliver was friends with William Fugate, who lived northeast of what is now Fairbury. The 1878 history book has a biography about William Fugate.

Many young men travel and work in different jobs and different states to “sow their wild oats” and figure out what they want to do with their lives.

William Fugate took a different approach, and took a horseback ride of over 1,000 miles. As of 2021, family descendants still have his horse saddle he used for his famous trip.

WILLIAM FUGATE, farmer and stock raiser, Sec. 35; P. O. Fairbury; a resident of Livingston Co., since 1856; was born in Wayne Co., Ind., near Richmond, March 26, 1820; when he was 3 years of age, his parents removed to Tippecanoe Co., Ind.; there he lived until his removal to Livingston Co., as above stated; in 1842, he made a journey on horseback across Illinois and through the State of Missouri, traveling more than a thousand miles. He was married April 24, 1848, to Miss Mary J. Ray; she was born in Madison Co., Ind., on the 10th of June, 1833; they have five children—Mary F., Henderson, Marion A., Daniel and Cloe M. On arriving in Livingston Co., he settled on his present farm; in August, the following year, his buildings were burned down and he has since erected his present commodious buildings; he owns 320 acres of land, valued at \$16,000. Mr. Fugate served one term on the Board of Supervisors.

CHAPTER 22

1879

Divorce

After being married to Franklin Oliver for 29 years and bearing three of his children, 46 year old Amaretta Oliver was granted a divorce per this June 19, 1879 Pantagraph article.

—Mrs. Oliver, wife of Franklin Oliver, of Livingston County, has secured a divorce, and gets 400 acres of land. Mr. Oliver is known as one of the richest and most eccentric residents of the county.

Trip Back Home to Bordentown

92 year old Franklin Oliver made a trip back to his hometown of Bordentown, New Jersey, per this August 11, 1879 article from the Daily True American.

Franklin Oliver, of Illinois, is in town accompanied by a lawyer. We understand that it is his intention to prove his ownership of considerable property now occupied by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company and a portion of Duck Island. Mr. O. is a native of Bordentown, 92 years of age, straight in body and active in mind.

No further information was published about this case. It is assumed that Franklin Oliver was still upset about the 1831 eminent domain case where the railroad forced his family to sell their land to the railroad.

CHAPTER 23

1880

Robbed and Beaten

The year of 1880 did not start out well for 93 year-old Franklin Oliver. He was robbed and beaten per this January 8, 1880 Pantagraph article.

—Mr. Franklin Oliver, the well-known patriarch of Oliver's Grove, Livingston County, was robbed on last Saturday night of \$600 by robbers who entered his house and bound him hand and foot.

Mr. Oliver was pretty roughly handled, being choked until he was black in the face. One hundred dollars concealed in an old pair of pants escaped the thieves.

Marriage in the Winds

The May 25, 1880 Pantagraph had an article about the status of Franklin Oliver.

A Gay Old Wooer—Old Man Oliver

—Mr. Oliver, of Oliver's Grove, Livingston County, aged 93 years old, is in Lexington on a business visit. Mr. Oliver is one of the oldest settlers in this part of the country, and is also very wealthy. It is reported that he is on his way East to get married. He has been married once and his wife obtained a divorce; also the court granted her 400 acres of land in addition to the divorce, and Mr. Oliver then gave her three hundred acres more, stating that anybody that married her would need that much land. He seems to be very healthy, and if he again gets

married no doubt it will prove a happy affair. It is stated that his intended resides in New Jersey, and he has consented to give her \$40,000 for her hand. Various other reports were circulated, but the above seems to be the most reliable of any of them.

Apparently, during his August 1879 trip back to Bordentown, New Jersey, he met a woman who he wanted to marry. No other documentation is known about this affair.

The writer of this article is also incorrect in saying that Franklin Oliver had just been married once before. Actually, he had been married and divorced three times by this date.

Sued by His Son

Near the end of 1880, Revilo Oliver filed a lawsuit against his father, Franklin Oliver. The article from the November 13, 1880, Pantagraph is shown below.

<p>CASES CONTINUED.</p> <p>Christian Verker vs. Franklin Oliver. Revilo Oliver vs. Franklin Oliver. John C. Robertson vs. Franklin Oliver.</p> <p>CASES DISMISSED.</p> <p>J. M. Moon vs. George Weidner.</p> <hr/>
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CHAPTER 24

1881

National News

At 94 years of age, Franklin Oliver's romantic affairs made the national newspapers. The first article to appear about this episode was in the February 3, 1881, *Pantagraph*.

OLIVER'S OPTIC

Which the Same of a Patriarchal Pioneer Has Been Successfully Fixed on a Gay Widder

Franklin Oliver, Esq., of Oliver's Grove, Livingston county, is as gay an old buck as ever gamboled on the green. He is a white-haired old patriarch of nearly a century's age, and yet the fire of his youth has not departed, and his natural force hath not abated—in his mind.

He is soon to wed Mrs. Phoebe Michaels, of Saybrook, a luscious widow of about thirty fleeting summers, whose experience in matrimonial felicity has been somewhat varied but so satisfactory, on the whole, that she is willing to wed a candidate for a not far distant interment.

Old man Oliver is one of the earliest settlers of Central Illinois, and owns vast tracts of land around Fairbury, so that his prospective wife will have a tolerably fat thing in a few years, unless she is prematurely snatched from domestic bliss.

The patriarchal Oliver is a most eccentric and unaccountable mortal, and has been united in matrimonial bonds on several previous occasions. He

has a temper of his own, and proposes to run the machine while he is permitted to paddle round on the footstool.

The *Pantagraph* wishes the ardent groom and his bride, that is to be, a happy honeymoon and all the joy that they can extract from matrimony.

A few weeks later, on February 25, 1881, the Pantagraph ran a follow up story about 94 year-old Franklin Oliver marrying a 30 year old woman from Saybrook.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM BLASTED

Oliver, the Giddy Century Plant Droops in Dark Despair—A Wedding Declared Off

—Mr. Franklin Oliver, patriarch of the Oliver tribe about Oliver's Grove, Livingston County, is a fresh and gay young buck of ninety-six summers. He wooed and all but won, as already related in the PANTAGRAPH, the fresh sweetheart of Mrs. Phoebe Michael, of Saybrook, whose face had gleamed under the frosts of but thirty winters.

His life has been a mingled panorama of blithesome and promiscuous love, of felling walnut trees, and buying land, and conducting lawsuits, and he stands without a peer in all branches of business. His wedded life has been numerous and not always productive of bliss. At the age of ninety-two his last matrimonial partner sued for a divorce on the ground that Mr. Oliver's amorous affections were too generally fixed on giddy females.

A year ago the sons of Oliver, thinking him too free and fresh in financial affairs, had a conservator appointed. When wooing the gentle Mrs. Michael, he incidentally

stated that the title to 880 broad acres of his big farm should rest in the new Mrs. Oliver the day she assumed his name.

She accidentally learned that his estate was in a conservator's hands, and that her handsome century plant could not legally hand over the proffered dowry. The wedding which was to have been celebrated this week she has declared off, and Franklin left her in a rage to journey home alone and shiver and sleep in a lonely single cot.

Oliver says it was her father's fault that the mother and girl were perfectly willing, and he expected to deed all his property to her at the wedding.

A few months later, the Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean picked up the story and published their version on June 20, 1881.

A CURIOUS CASE.

At the Age of Ninety-five an Illinois Man Is Bound to Get Married,

And Squanders His Fortune Upon the Fair Ones Who Give Him Encouragement,

**Remarkable Peculiarities and Incidents of His Life—
An Unprecedented Case**

Special Correspondence of The Inter Ocean.

Pontiac, Ill., May 19.—A large portion of the time of the County Court during the week past has been taken up in hearing the evidence and argument in the case of Franklin Oliver, alleged to be insane. The case is such an interesting one, and so novel that the full facts ought to go on record.

About the year 1833 Franklin Oliver, then a resident of Washington, D. C, where for a long time he had been a politician of some note, having considerable means, looked South and West to buy a large body of land, having in his enlarged notions some idea of making it a feudal estate or dukedom.

Between Florida and Illinois, after some hesitation, he chose the latter, and as the Kickapoo Indians retired from Kickapoo Grove, near the extreme southeastern part of what is now Livingston County, at that time not organized, he purchased what since then has been known far and wide as "Oliver's Grove," containing 900 acres of beautiful native timber. Around this grove he secured, by entry or otherwise, about 2,400 acres more, and made that his home, and for all one could see, his life also. He would never allow a tree to be cut. He would have no cultivation of the land: no "improvements," so called, were erected on the Oliver domain.

A SMALL CABIN

part log and Part board, was erected, with it doorway so small that the old man stooped to enter it. For long years it was a place for travelers to stop, and many are the stories told of old man Oliver, who is now in his 95th year, still dashing around here and there making love to any woman who will listen to the outpourings of his love-torn heart.

He was always an infidel of the most pronounced type, and delighted in expressing his views even more than Ingersoll does. At one time two Methodist ministers stopped over night with him, and in those days no minister traveling in Illinois ever expected to pay for a night's lodging. This *lex loci* the old man would not tolerate, and told them in the absence of money they must stand out before his house and preach with all their

might to pay his hotel charges. The preaching went on, while he stood in front as the congregation, wherein the Amen's and responses would naturally come in.

SWEARING LIKE A TROOPER

He intended to buy a large tract of land, which was afterward given by the Douglas bill to the Illinois Central Railroad Company, and he never forgave Douglas for giving force to the Central Railroad cause. Mr. Oliver was a red-hot Democrat, but the curses which he poured out on Stephen A. Douglas were fearful to hear. His intention was to have made a great estate, but the failure to get that which was held at only illegible centers per acre changed his entire course.

He was for many years the agent of Bonaparte on his great New Jersey estate, laying out his grounds and making roads, bridges, and improvements, but he would never allow a road or a bridge on his land here.

About five years ago he seems to have changed his course and commenced disposing of his vast land in different ways. During all this time he has continued his "distraction" of making love to every woman who would listen to him. He became alienated from his family, and his children claim that a great deal of his property has been lost: that he is not any longer able to attend to his business: that he is selling his land for a song, and is trying to

TRADE OFF THE BALANCE FOR A WIFE

One son has obtained a judgment of \$7,000 against him, another has gone and has not been heard from, but two who are still interested in the property are living here, and another in Texas.

His son, Franklin C. Oliver, finding that the property was fast passing out of the possession of his father, united with Edward, another son, to file a complaint in the County Court, and asked that the court would inquire, under section 1 of chapter 86, Revised Statutes, whether his father was "distracted" in the sense of the act (there was no claim that the old man was insane), praying that a conservator might be appointed to take care of the estate. This, while not an entirely unprecedented case, is an uncommon one, the charge being, and the one which the complainant attempted to show, that the old man was affected by what is termed in medical jurisprudence erotomania.

The complainants, through the Hon. C. C. Straw, their attorney, in bringing this suit did it only after a large portion of his property had been wasted, nearly all of which lost by reason of his mania for women. That a man of 94 should be so devoted to the sex as to waste all that for nearly 50 years he had held intact is to say the least most singular, and in this fact, as set up in the claim of his sons and proved in the evidence, rests the peculiarity of the case.

It was shown that from 1833 until 1875 he never had even entertained the question of alienating encumbering, or cultivating this land; that he would not permit men to graze the land with the herds which surrounded him, and that he had repeatedly said that he would have it as near in a state of nature as he found it. He has been three times married, and

HIS LAST WIFE WAS DIVORCED FROM HIM.

The case was heard before Judge Wallace, and a jury, opening Tuesday and lasting until Friday morning, when the jury returned a verdict for the complainant, holding that he was so far distracted that he was not a fit person to manage his property, thus authorizing the court, to

appoint a conservator. The defendant declared his purpose of taking an appeal.

Some of the singular points made by the complainants were: That upon one occasion, when he had an important suit in the Circuit Court of McLean County, wherein his son Revilo Oliver was claim to some \$7,000, that he started to go to Bloomington to attend this suit, having taken the cars at Chatsworth for that purpose, and there met a woman, whom he accompanied to Saybrook, and remained at the family residence of his fair Dulcenia for some days, pressing his suit with such vigor, for her hand in marriage, that she finally consented, and would have married him had she not discovered that the very land he was promising to convey to her in ante-nuptial agreement had already been clouded as to its title by

SOME OF HIS FOOLISH DEALINGS

Evidence showed that no matter how important the business upon which he was engaged, or however much the much the conversation might be to his interest, as soon as the woman was mentioned the old man would give business no further notice in the fair face of the more engrossing attraction.

At one time about three years ago he took a great fancy to Stella Howard, a fair and some what frail sister, then living at Pontiac, and entered into an agreement to marry her—he was then only 92 years old—and to make over to her one thousand acres of land and settle on her enough besides for her living in style in Washington City. He went to the stores and verbally gave her unlimited credit, and agreed to settle her board bill for some months. The marriage for some reason did not take place, but a judgment against him followed this enterprise of \$200, and a quarter section of land was sold to satisfy it.

He says now that the court may appoint a conservator at any time if he will appoint some fair and buxom widow, but if the widow is not appointed, will appeal and keep on fighting this thing till there is an icy sheet in that void place which the new revision is popularly supposed to have verbally abolished.

Comments About the Inter-ocean Articles

Since Franklin Oliver was 94 years old and the court had declared him incompetent, one has to question the accuracy of the information provided to the reporter.

Franklin stated he was a politician of some note living in Washington, D.C. in 1833. No evidence can be found that he ever lived in Washington or that he served in any political office.

Three years earlier in 1878, the 81 year old Oliver told the Daily Illinois State Register reporter that he traveled from Bordentown in 1819 to New Orleans, St. Louis, and Kaskaskia, before settling in the Chatsworth area. There was no mention of living in Washington, D.C. in that interview.

This article is also the first written reference describing how Franklin Oliver managed his thousands of acres of farmland. Although Oliver was happy to improve Joseph Bonaparte's lands in Bordentown, he did not allow any improvements in his Illinois land including logging or farming.

If this was really Franklin Oliver's farming method, then it begs the question of how did he derive income to pay his family's living expenses and to pay taxes on his land. It appears his only option was to periodically sell off portions of his land to generate an income. Maybe this explains why the 4,711 acres he purchased from the federal government gradually shrunk down to almost nothing.

Daily Illinois State Journal Story June 28, 1881

Franklin Oliver bought 3300 acres of forest a few miles from Peoria fifty years ago, built a log house in the center of the tract, and has lived there ever since. He became noted for eccentricities, and it is of him the story is told of two Methodist ministers, who, having no money to pay for the lodging and breakfast which he had given them, were compelled to preach a sermon piece to him as the sole congregation.

Oliver resolved to never allow a bit of his land to be cultivated, declaring that he would leave it as his death just as he found it; but five years ago, at the age of 90, he suddenly changed his purpose and habits.

From being a woman hater, he turned to loving the sex with the ardor of youth. He wooed several girls and women at a time, and won their promises to marry him by giving them pieces of his land. In that way he has rid himself of a great part of his now extremely valuable property, and his heirs in order to save the remainder, have had him judiciously declared incapable of managing his business.

Daily Illinois State Journal July 1, 1881

The Peoria Journal writes up the case of old man Franklin Oliver, who fifty years ago purchased over three thousand acres of land in Livingston County, and who is now called on to know why a conservator should not be appointed to prevent his wasteful squandering of what remains of the estate. The old man, now past 90 years of age, has developed a “woman mania,” and it is believed that within the last twelve months he has seriously proposed marriage to a dozen different women—some of whom have turned his love to profitable account.

Death of Franklin Oliver

Franklin Oliver died on September 19, 1881 at 94 years of age. His obituary in the Chatsworth Plaindealer is shown below.

September 24, 1881

At the advanced age of 94 years, 5 months, and 11 days. On Monday, the 19th at 10:35 PM, Franklin Oliver expired at Chenoa, Illinois. He had been temporarily stopping at Chenoa and was taken ill about one week ago; which sickness, at his advanced age, proved too much for his enfeebled constitution and resulted in his death, as above stated.

Mr. Oliver was in many things a remarkable man, and for years has been very eccentric in many respects. He lived to a great age, having been born at Bordentown. New Jersey, on the 8th day of April, 1787.

Had he lived to his next birthday, he would have been 95 years of age. Born in comfortable circumstances, his parents offered him advantages for an education, but being of a wild disposition he did not make much

progress in this direction in his boyhood, but age caused him to realize the necessity for an education, and he acquired a most excellent knowledge by his own exertions after arriving at his majority.

The subject of this sketch was married three times. The result of the first union was five children. as follows: Edward R, who now resides in Texas; Bordenott. who now resides in Kansas; Helen, since deceased; Franklin Jr., who resides at the west end of Oliver Grove; and James. who resides in California.

The result of the second union was one daughter, Caroline, who lives near Pontiac. His third wife. who was divorced some years since, survives him, and now resides southeast of the grove with their three children: Revile. John L, and Florence F.

Mr. Oliver started from the east intending at the time to go to Missouri; but while crossing this state learned of this grove, which bears his name, through a Frenchman, when he changed his original intention came to the grove, and was the first white settler in what is now Chatsworth Township.

He came from the state of New Jersey in 1833, and settled here among the Indians, with whom he ever remained on the most friendly terms. When other white people in the surrounding settlements, becoming frightened at the warlike reports of the Black Hawk campaign, retreated upward the Wabash settlements, Oliver remained upon his claim, and went in and out among the red men without molestation.

His father, he informed us, was a Quartermaster in the Revolutionary war, and many of the old soldier's official papers were in his possession until some years ago when his house was burned and they met the fate of much of his household property. Many of these papers, he said,

were rather quaint, and would present a marked contrast, doubtless to the ponderous accounts and vouchers of a Quartermaster in our late war.

Mr. Oliver and his family were the only white people in the township for many years. A number of settlements were made in Indian Grove and other timber localities, but not till away up in the 'fifties' were other settlements made in Chatsworth.

Mr. Oliver, thirteen years ago, was worth, say seventy-five thousand dollar having the entire grove property free from encumbrance, besides other lands and property in the east.

And while not a man of extravagant habits, at the time of his death, not sufficient of this vast wealth was compatible to pay the funeral expenses. His body was brought to this place on Wednesday, by his grandson, Mr. Patrick Oliver, and placed in the silent tomb, Wednesday afternoon.

Burial Place Unknown

The descendants of Franklin Oliver do not know where his body was buried. The obituary description in the Chatsworth Plaindealer states, "His body was brought to this place on Wednesday, by his grandson, Mr. Patrick Oliver, and placed in the silent tomb, Wednesday afternoon." It is not known what the 1881 expression "placed in the silent tomb" means.

Since he died with no cash to pay for funeral expenses, it is likely his body was interred in the ground somewhere on his farm at Oliver's Grove. Another possibility is that he was buried in the Chatsworth cemetery in an unmarked grave.

CHAPTER 25

1892

Alma Lewis James

Alma Lewis James of Fairbury devoted a complete chapter in her 1967 Stuffed Clubs book to the life of Franklin Oliver.

Alma is to be commended for researching and writing her Fairbury history book prior to the age of computers.

From a historical researcher perspective, there are several weaknesses in using her book for modern research. One weakness is she did not cite the sources of her information. Another weakness is that she let some of her and her family's biases creep into her book. Alma also "embellished" her history stories using rumors or other information that is not factual.

Alma Lewis James noted in the "**Forward**" section of her book, the tales in the book were not necessarily factual.

Foreword

This is the account of the founding of Fairbury, a little town of Livingston County, Central Illinois.

The tales are not intended as solemn history but for pleasure, and to show that, if parents are people, so are grandparents, and their fathers and mothers before them. They hustled for a living, paid their taxes, worried about their children, had their fun and their troubles. They were real.

The story begins with one man's project for his farm just before the Civil War; and it ends with the century, when electricity and the automobile changed the pattern of family life.

I leave my story there. Anyone desiring to ascertain what man was candidate for a political office, or how many tons of coal were mined during a given year, is respectfully referred to any of the three histories of Livingston County.

The three histories she referred to are the 1878, 1888, and 1909 history books.

In all small towns, there were always several prominent families in the community, and often they were rivals and did not get along. Alma Lewis James was from the Beach and Dominy tribes. They did not get along with the McDowell family, another prominent Fairbury family.

Her chapter from her 1967 book is excerpted and shown below. In her chapter, she alleged that Judge Payson of Pontiac and Judge McDowell of Fairbury stole most of Franklin Oliver's land when he was mentally incapacitated. She claimed that both men were so disgraced when they got caught they both had to move to Washington, D.C.

After her chapter excerpt, we will attempt to separate fact from fiction using documented reference materials.

CHAPTER XVIII

Old Man Oliver

Old Man Oliver was not a Fairburian, but he was well known there, and he was long a legendary figure throughout Central Illinois.

He was a quarter-part Indian, and was short and slender, with long black hair which turned white as he grew old, and he had an ability in profanity that was second to none. He lived in the woods south of the present town of Chatsworth, and for many years he was the sole white settler around there. One family, venturing into the territory, built a cabin fifteen miles away from him. Oliver found out about it, and paid them a visit. With searing comments, he ordered them to move along, for he didn't fancy having neighbors living that close. Oliver enjoyed visiting, however, and always stopped at the William Fugate farm, at the Vermilion River ford, on his yearly trips to Ottawa to get his flour ground. Mrs. Fugate never failed to give him a good meal, but the men ate together alone, while she saw to it that the children remained out of earshot.

Old Man Oliver, or, more properly, Franklin Oliver, was born in New Jersey state, sometime around 1786. His father had been quartermaster in the Revolutionary War, and was a personal friend of Benjamin Franklin. His grandson, Orville Oliver, long-time owner of "Oliver's Grove", said Benjamin Franklin had given the Quartermaster a portrait of himself. Francis

brought it with him when he started west, and prized it highly, especially as he kept five thousand dollars hidden in the back of it. He also brought his father's quartermaster papers and many documents of the Revolution, but these and the portrait were all lost in the fire that burned down his farm home.

According to the family legend, Oliver, with his wife and children, was headed for California when he came to this grove of trees which appealed to him as a camp site. He entered it, and immediately found himself surrounded by Indians. He drove his case knife into the nearest tree as a sign of peace, and the Kickapoos presently withdrew to their council fire to hold a pow-wow. Mrs. Oliver built a little fire of her own, and cooked supper for her family. After they had eaten, the Indians returned to conduct him to their chief, who offered him their pipe of peace. Oliver was not a smoker, but he always said this was one time when he was glad to indulge. The family lived in a teepee at first, and then the Indians helped them build a log cabin.

They were friendly, but they were still suspicious of him, for the Black Hawk War was brewing. Caution compelled Oliver always to stay in plain sight where they could watch him easily. They did trust him sufficiently, however, to allow him to warn the settlers at Avoca. He was even able to arrange a meeting for them with the chief, and they got partial assurance for their safety if they left at once. This they were able to do, in spite of the fact that they were delayed for two days in plain sight of the warriors, while one of the women, Mrs. Jourdan, gave birth to a baby girl.

Oliver did not go back east with the other settlers, and this made him a marked man. He stayed there at the Grove during the war, coming and going with more or less freedom. The chief grew so fond of him he named his son for him. Later, Oliver gave the chief's name to the village of Saunemin. As a matter of fact, the Kickapoos did not appear especially hostile to the white settlers. They had been converted to Christianity by Reverend William Walker, a circuit rider from Ottawa. When Oliver came they were holding their own services, and they had prayer "books" with drawings to tell the stories, and walnut boards for covers.

Moreover, there was another white man who had won their special esteem. Major Darnall was one of the earliest settlers in the territory south of Fairbury, and his cabin was close to the trail the Kickapoos used to go back and forth to their hunting grounds. Late one autumn, a little party of braves stopped at Darnall's cabin, and asked if they might leave their supply of maple sugar with him until they could pick it up again the next spring. They had a long, bitterly cold winter, and food became very scarce, but when the Indians called for their sugar, Darnall handed it to them intact, and they went their way marveling at the white man's scrupulous honesty. Years later, after the Kickapoos had been removed from the territory to a reservation in Oklahoma, Darnall finally admitted he had been mightily tempted to use the sugar, but he was stopped cold when he discovered it was thick with dog hairs.

The Kickapoos themselves were a fine-looking people, intelligent, industrious, and tolerably clean. Their women were far more beautiful than

the average squaws. They all did the work, raised the crop of corn, beans, and potatoes, and dressed the game and fish their men brought home. There were about 700 in the tribe, and they had a council house and village by the river near the site of the future town of Fairbury, and the French used it as a trading post. The soil of the commons there was rich with arrow heads and other relics, but this was all covered over when the railroad hauled in dirt on flat cars and filled it four feet deep. The permanent Kickapoo village was at the Grove where they had built a large council house, with ninety-seven wigwams and several small encampments. The wigwams were made of the rushes which grew luxuriantly in the river bottoms, and they were carpeted with mats made of more of the same. Their relics showed that they made good utensils and weapons, and one ingenious hatchet had a hole in the length of the handle and a pipe bowl in the head so that it could be used either for scalping or smoking.

The Kickapoos were renowned as a nation of warriors, and they had joined with the Miamies and Pottawatomies against the Confederation of the Illinois tribes in their last stand at the battle of Starved Rock, in 1774. Just one year later, the Kickapoos and Pottawatomies quarreled with the Miamies over the division of the territory they had won. In an effort to settle the dispute sensibly, each side chose three-hundred men to fight. The battle took place on the banks of Sugar Creek, south of their grove, and when it was over, there were just twelve men who were not killed or seriously wounded: five Miamies and seven Kickapoos. After that the Kickapoos and Pottawatomies divided the territory between them, the Kickapoos taking the portion to the

east, and the boundary was marked by a trail which passed near Oliver's Grove. The trail averaged eight inches deep and fifteen inches wide, and traces of it exist even today. The Black Hawk War was over by the fall of 1832, and once the Indians were taken to the reservation, the white settlers began coming in to occupy the land. It was not officially surveyed until a year later, and everyone squatted wherever he chose, provided, of course, that no one else was occupying it previously.

Oliver had been left in possession of the Kickapoo village, and so he just stayed there; and, since he was a civil engineer and surveyor by profession, he received the job of surveying all that part of the country. He was in on the ground floor, and he could take his choice of land. He acquired over four thousand acres of the best, most of it in timberland, for he wanted no other, and he was one of the great land owners of early Illinois. When the mail routes were established, his home was the post office, and then, as settlers became more numerous, it became a sort of inn offering shelter to travelers. So widespread was the sinister reputation of the place, that men lodging there for the night slept on their guns. There was supposed to be, hidden away in his timber, a great pile of iron wheel rims left over from the burning of many immigrant wagons, the owners of which were never seen again, and the tales of Oliver's robberies and murders were endless.

His very appearance supported the legends about him. His hair was white now, and since he wore it shoulder length, it had a breath-stopping, eerie look when blown by the wind. Fairbury children were in terror of his very name, for it was said

that as each one of his children were born, he took his pocket knife and notched their ears, identifying them, like his animals, as his own. Pioneers were warned not to stop at Oliver's, but to keep on going until they got to Billy Fugate's. Sometimes the river was so high they could not ford it, and then they would have to make camp on the river bank until the water went down. Mrs. Fugate baked bread for them, and gave them milk and eggs, and they had an opportunity to rest in safety. If the current was not too swift, the travelers still were able to ford the flooded stream. They roped the wagon box securely to the running gear, so that it would not float away from the wheels, and drove it to a high bank above the ford. Everyone remained in their places in the wagon, while the horses, still harnessed to it, were driven to jump off the bank. They swam downstream until they came to the regular ford and were able to walk out, still pulling their wagon and passengers.

Orville Oliver had an explanation for at least part of the rumors about his grandfather. Nimrod Maple, owner of a Fairbury harness shop, once told him that when he was a boy, he had gone hunting on Oliver's land around Chatsworth and Piper City. It was all marshes through there, and wild ducks and other game abounded. A rim of higher dry ground encircled this, but somewhere in the middle of the bog was a long stretch of quicksand, discovered when the land was tiled. Small animals could scoot across this area, but all the larger ones had to go around or be forever lost. Without a doubt, this quicksand was responsible for at least part of the disappearances attributed to Oliver.

His first wife had died long since. The second one, an Indian girl, passed away; and then, at the age of 65, he married a sixteen year old girl, and had children by her also. The poor wife had a stormy time of it. Divorce meant social ostracism then, but she finally hailed her ninety-year old husband into court and charged him with adultery, desertion, and failure to provide for his family for ten years. Upon his admission that it was all true, the court granted the divorce, awarded her four hundred acres of land in outright ownership, and gave her the custody of the minor children, the youngest of whom was eight.

Infuriated by this decision, Old Man Oliver deeded all his land to Judge Woodford McDowell, of Fairbury, and Judge Payson, of Pontiac, so that his former wife could not get hold of any of it. The bad feeling between Oliver and his family grew to such fantastic proportions that, after one Saturday night when he was bound, choked and beaten, then robbed of six hundred dollars, he publicly identified one of the assailants as his own son.

A few months before he died, his children summoned him into court again for a trial by jury, and it was decided that he was mentally incompetent to manage his own affairs. The judge appointed a conservator for him, which threw Oliver into a black fury. He was one-hundred and twelve years old, but he was still quite active physically, and able to travel alone wherever he wished; and so he appealed his case, swearing to fight it to the limit. He was in Chenoa as the result of this, when he was taken with a congestive chill, and died "alone and among strangers." So great a bitterness did his

children feel for him, that not one of them was present at his death bed; and when his will was read, it was discovered that he had conveyed most of his remaining property to some nieces. His frustrated natural heirs brought suit against Judge Payson, charging that the conveyance of over one thousand acres of land was made without adequate consideration, and, moreover, Franklin Oliver had been incompetent to give such a deed. In spite of all this, Judge Bookwalter, of Danville, who heard the case, decided every point in favor of Payson, leaving the complainants no legal ground for action. Popular opinion, already against Payson and McDowell, felt that these members of the Bar were conspiring together, and that all of them were rascals. The Oliver children appealed, but it was not until two years later that the Supreme Court made Payson disgorge. It ruled that the title to about half of the land, which he had purchased at a sheriff's sale, was good, but the rest of it, then worth about fifty thousand dollars, had been fraudulently obtained. Payson was ordered to give an accounting of the rents and the proceedings of the sale, but he was to receive credit for any improvements he had made.

In the case of the land Judge McDowell had received, however, there was no lawsuit. It was commonly said that a short time before his death Old Man Oliver paid him a visit, and had frightened him so effectively that he was only too glad to return his share of the loot, which was the land willed to the nieces. Interest in the trial was widespread. Oliver himself was anything but popular, but there was so much sympathy for Mrs. Oliver and her children that it ruined the reputations of both Payson and

McDowell. Public opinion against them was so strong that both of them were forced to leave the country. Both of them moved to Washington, D.C., where they made their homes thereafter.

For the man who had been a first settler, a founder of Avoca and of the Pioneer Methodist Church, a pillar of the Fairbury Methodists, the first lawyer and Justice of the Peace, a Judge of the County Court, an organizer and the first president of the Old Settlers' Association, a man of considerable wealth and great dignity, the Blade had not one word of farewell.

Fact Versus Fiction

The first embellishment encountered in this chapter was that Franklin Oliver was a quarter-part Indian. If he was one-quarter Indian, one of his four grandparents would have to have been Native American.

John Oliver, Franklin's father emigrated from Ireland to Bordentown. John Oliver's parents were from Ireland, so they were not Native American.

Franklin Oliver's maternal grandparents were Caleb Carman (1708-1807) and Elizabeth Wood (1721-1808) and neither of them were Native Americans.

Because Franklin Oliver successfully and peacefully lived with the Kickapoo Indians for about seven months, it embellishes the story to state he was one-quarter Native American.

Benjamin Franklin Portrait Burned in the 1877 Chatsworth Fire

Alma stated this portrait was lost in the fire at Oliver's Grove. The 1900 history book states the portrait was still in the family's possession at that date.

Robbing and Murdering Travelers

Alma's book recounts that travelers were afraid to stay overnight at Franklin Oliver's home because he might murder them, then burn up their wagons and throw the steel wagon wheels on the pile of wheels in his yard.

No written evidence has been found to support this claim.

Notching the Ears of the Oliver Children

It was and is common practice to notch the ears of livestock to mark them for various reasons. There is no written evidence to support the claim that Franklin Oliver notched the ears of his children.

Wrong About Marriages of Franklin Oliver's

Franklin Oliver married his first wife, Hannah Rockhill, in 1818 in New Jersey. He apparently divorced her prior to 1848 when he married Sarah Wirtz in 1848. Hannah Rockhill died in 1850 at the age of 50.

Oliver's second marriage only lasted about two years. They divorced by 1850 and the grounds of that divorce are unknown.

Oliver married a third time in 1850 to 17 year old Amaretta Smith. Oliver was 63 years old when he married her. Their marriage lasted 26 years until she divorced him in 1876. The grounds for that divorce are unknown.

There is no written record of Franklin Oliver marrying a Native American girl.

Beaten Up by His Son

Alma alleged that Franklin Oliver identified one of his assailants as being his son when he was severely beaten in 1880. No written record could be supporting this claim.

Deeding All Land to Judge Payson of Pontiac and Judge McDowell of Fairbury's

Alma alleged that when Amaretta Smith divorced Franklin Oliver in 1876 and she was awarded 400 acres, Franklin Oliver was so unhappy with the settlement that he deeded all his land to the two judges.

There is no written evidence to support this claim. In fact it would be unethical and probably illegal for the two judges to accept land at no charge from one of their clients.

Two Judges Took Advantage of a Senile Franklin Oliver and Stole all His Land

Alma alleged Judge Payson of Pontiac and Judge McDowell took advantage of Franklin Oliver and stole his land. This allegation turns out to be half correct. Below, we explore this allegation further.

Judge Payson Biography

There is no mention of Lewis E. Payson (1840-1909) in the 1878 history book. There is a biography in the 1888 history book.

HON. LEWIS E. PAYSON. It has been truly said that the history of a country is contained in the lives of its citizens. Most emphatically can this saying be applied to Livingston County, and her distinguished citizen, Hon. L. E. Payson, of Pontiac, now Member of Congress for the Ninth District of Illinois.

Judge Payson is a native of Rhode Island, and was born in Providence, Sept. 17, 1841, and is the eldest child of Hanson and Maria (Briggs) Payson, natives of the same State. All the children of Hanson and Maria Payson, five in number, are now living but one. Those living besides our subject are: Hanson L., now living in Milwaukee, and engaged in the mercantile business; Charles, a prominent attorney of Iroquois County, and Alma, now Mrs. S. Simmons, also of Iroquois County. The paternal grandfather of Hanson Payson was a native of Massachusetts, where he engaged in the manufacture of paper, and was a much respected citizen. The father of the subject of our biography was a contractor and builder. In 1852 he moved with his family to Illinois, settling in Henry County, where he engaged in farming. He

has now retired from active labor, and is living in Iroquois County.

Young Payson attended the schools of Providence up to the time his parents emigrated to the West, From this time until he was nineteen years of age he assisted his father in farm work. He was then placed at Lombard University, Knox County, Ill., to complete his school education. Subsequent to his college life he had the degree of LLD conferred upon him. After leaving the university he repaired to Ottawa, Ill., and entered as a student in the law office of Bushnell, Avery & Gray, studying there until September, 1862, when he was admitted to the bar. He remained with the above-named firm until 1865, when he came to Pontiac and opened a law office. He was quite successful in his law practice, and soon took front rank with the members of his profession. He was elected to the office of City Attorney in 1867, which position he held for three consecutive years. At the end of that time he was elected to the office of County Judge and served four years. In 1880 Judge Payson was elected to his first term in Congress, as a Republican Representative from the Ninth District, to which place he has been continuously re-elected. Prior to this time he was on the Board of Education for several years; was local attorney for the Chicago & Alton Railroad Co. for fifteen years, and for the Illinois Central for ten years. He not only distinguished himself as an able lawyer and advocate, but was successful financially, accumulating a large property.

In 1876 the Judge completed his present beautiful residence, which contains all the modern conveniences and luxuries. The grounds,

which are extensive, are elegantly laid out and adorned with choice flowers and shrubs and tall shade trees. There is a gradual slope from the dwelling backward, terminating at the waters of the Vermilion, which gracefully winds around, shaded by trees. whose branches extend over its banks.

From the time of Mr. Payson's first entrance into Congress he has been active, laborious and watchful, ever looking to the good of the country and his constituents. This course has placed him among the foremost legislators of Congress, and given him an influential position. During his long term there he has been on many important committees, among which were the Judiciary, Public and Private Lands, and Coinage. He was appointed by President Arthur on the Assay Commission, serving two years. Here, as at all times, looking to the general welfare of the people, he was opposed to the suspension of the silver coinage. Among the more important bills introduced by Judge Payson, and bills championed by him, were those having for their object the reclaiming to the public domain what is known as lapsed land grants, which were conditionally granted to railroad corporations, and the Alien Land Bill. By his able efforts, and those of his co-workers, the prodigal land policy pursued by former legislators has been set aside or annulled, disappointing the voracious appetites of land-shark railroad corporations, thereby saving millions of acres of land to the Government. Some fourteen bills were passed and became laws for reclaiming to the Government lands which had been granted to railroad corporations, and which had been forfeited by them for non-compliance with the conditions of said grants.

Judge Payson took the ground that the railroad corporations not having carried out the provisions of the laws granting these lands. Congress had the power to restore them to the public domain; that the grant was not a mere present but was a premium, offered to secure certain work done of public importance. Others held that Congress had not the power to restore these lands. These measures were passed in the Forty-eighth Congress. From the Texas Pacific there were restored to the Government between 18,000,000 and 19,000,000 acres; from the Atlantic & Pacific about 23,000,000. There were other minor bills passed restoring about 12,000,000. These lands were mostly in California, New Mexico and the Indian Territory. The result of the revocation of the indemnity land reservation was the restoration to the Government for settlement of some 30,000,000 acres. In this, Judge Payson was the pioneer. By his own special efforts about 55,000,000 acres of granted lands have been restored to the control of the Government.

Another bill in which the subject of this sketch was the principal mover was one providing for the unlawful enclosure of the public domain, the Alien Land Bill, which he introduced, and had passed by the last Congress, providing that no foreigner shall acquire or hold any real estate wherein the United States has jurisdiction. The passage of this bill will be of great benefit to the people of the United States.

Judge Payson is also preparing a bill which he proposes to introduce to the next Congress, regulating emigration to the United States. This bill provides that no foreigner, unless coming on

a pleasure tour, shall be permitted to land here, without producing a certificate from the United States Consul stationed at the port, or in the country from which he comes, stating that he was a law-abiding citizen, and had been self-sustaining up to the time of his departure. This will be one of the most if not the most important bill that he has been presented to Congress for many years, and should be supported by all who have the true interests of America at heart. Should the Judge secure the passage of this bill he will add greatly to his well-earned fame as a legislator, statesman and patriot.

In the Senatorial election for a successor to the lamented Logan, Judge Payson secured nineteen votes, and was next to the successful candidate, Hon. C. B. Farwell. On none could the mantle of this distinguished soldier and statesman have better fallen than on the subject of this biography, and really he is the man for the public to look to, to take the place of this departed statesman.

The Judge has been frequently and favorably mentioned as the Republican candidate for Governor of Illinois, but he would much prefer to remain in Congress and finish the legislation he has in view. Unquestionably he can hold his place in Congress as long as he desires. He enjoys the confidence and the affection of his constituency, and this may be applied, not only to the Republican, but the Democratic party. He is supported by the people of the district, irrespective of party, and he has so ably and faithfully represented their interests that they want no other.

Judge Payson is now in the prime of manhood, and it might be said is now especially fitted by study and long experience for a career of great usefulness to the nation. The time in which he is not engaged in public affairs he spends chiefly with his family at his beautiful home, which is surrounded with elegance and culture. Like most prominent and intellected men the Judge has the faculty of remembering in a remarkable degree, the features and names of persons when he meets. He rarely forgets a name or face. There is hardly a man in his district whose name he cannot give the instant of greeting.

Judge Payson has a splendid physique, standing five feet ten and one-half inches. His chest is deep, and shoulders broad, carrying a large and well balanced head. His features are full and open, with an ample forehead, beneath which are light blue, or gray eyes, glowing with honest brightness. His complexion is somewhat florid, with hair cast in blonde, now slightly sprinkled with gray. His voice is clear and rich in private conversation, in which he excels, and magnetic and commanding in the forum or on the stump. As an orator he has but few equals in the country. Added to this a dignified bearing, a polished and cordial manner, and a pretty fair pen portrait may he had of the popular and distinguished Representative of the Ninth Congressional District of Illinois.

Judge Payson Buys 700 Acres at Low Price

The December 7, 1878, edition of the Weekly Standard published the article below about Judge Payson's land purchase.

—Judge Payson, of Pontiac, has purchased 700 acres of the Oliver Estate, near Chatsworth, paying a very low price for it. It is a very fine piece of land.

1892 Lawsuit Filed Against Judge Payson

The April 9, 1892, edition of the Inter Ocean newspaper published the following article.

WANT THE LAND BACK

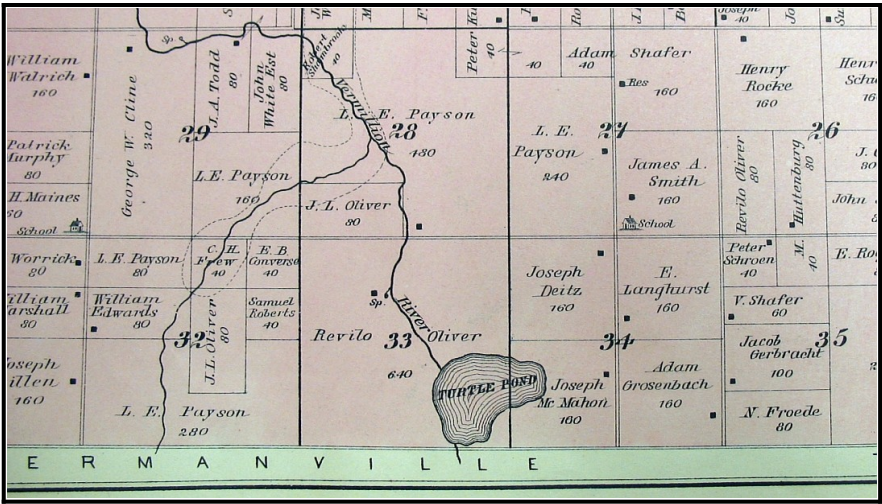
Ex-Congressman Payson Accused of Taking Advantage of an Aged Man

Bloomington, Ill., April 8. —Special Telegram. —Frances Ross and Caroline Dorr, daughters of the late Franklin Oliver, an eccentric and wealthy pioneer of Livingston County, today brought suit against Lewis E. Payson, of Pontiac, ex-Congressman, for the recovery of 1,200 acres of land at Oliver's Grove, near Chatsworth. Oliver died in 1881, aged 94. He had been the owner of thousands of acres of valuable land, but during the last few years of his life had lost all his property.

The complainant alleges that Payson got into his possession 1,200 acres of the land for the paltry sum of \$4,400, the land being actually worth \$60,000 or more; that Oliver, during the last years of his life, was in feeble mind and was unable to care for his property.

1893 Livingston County Atlas

This atlas shows the land owned by Revilo Oliver and also land owned by Judge L. E. Payson.



Judge Payson Wins First Suit

The March 3, 1894, Pantagraph published the following story.

PAYSON-OLIVER CASE

Mr. Payson, the Defendant, Wins the Famous Land Case

Fairbury, March 2.—[Special.]—The Payson-Oliver case, which has attracted some attention, is settled in favor of the defendant, Hon. L. E. Payson, Judge Bookwalter, of Danville, presided and listened to the vast amount of evidence that was brought in on both sides. The suit was brought in this, the Livingston county circuit court, by the heirs of Franklin Oliver, among the first settlers of this county, they claiming that their father at the time when he transferred the 1,400 acres to Mr. Payson was weak-minded and was not responsible for his doings. The land is very valuable now and the heirs will carry the case to the higher courts. Mr. Payson's friends, on the other side, claim that the cry of fraud on the part of Payson in securing this land was for political purposes at the time he made his last race for congress in this, the old Ninth District, as the records showed that he purchased certificates at sheriff's sale from the following attorneys, who obtained judgments against Franklin Oliver; W.H. Cushman, of Ottawa, Ill.; C. C. Strawn, William T. Ament and A.E. Harding, of Pontiac, and R.E. Williams, of Bloomington. Mr.

Payson secured these certificates from those parties and bought the widow's dower from Mrs. Franklin Oliver.

1896 Illinois Supreme Court Case

Judge Payson lost this lawsuit in the Illinois Supreme Court Case Ross V. Payson 160 Ill. 349, <https://tinyurl.com/y79fecvj>.

The Supreme Court cited several reasons why they agreed with Franklin Oliver's children, that Judge Payson took advantage of Oliver's feeble condition. Excerpts from this case are shown below.

..... The consideration paid for these lands was so grossly inadequate that the court will presume the deeds thereto were obtained by fraud.

..... Whenever there is a great mental weakness in a person executing a conveyance of land, arising from age, sickness or any other cause, though not amounting to an absolute disqualification, and the consideration given for the property is grossly inadequate, a court of equity will set the conveyance aside.

..... The purchase by defendant Payson, while he was acting as Franklin Oliver's attorney, of certificates of purchase on sheriff's sales on execution against Oliver, was fraudulent.

1,100 Acres Owned in 1900 by Amaretta Oliver

The 1900 history book notes that Amaretta derived a handsome income from the 1,100 acres of farm land that she owned.

Federal government land purchase records indicate Franklin Oliver purchased 4,711 acres. Since his wife still owned 1,100 acres per the 1900 history book, this means his 4,711 acres gradually dwindled down to just 1,100 acres by Oliver's death in 1881.

No Lawsuits

The author conducted literature searches in an attempt to find any lawsuits filed against Judge Woodford G. McDowell by the heirs of Franklin Oliver. No evidence of any lawsuits could be found.

The Truth

Alma Lewis James alleged the reputations of both Judge Payson and Judge McDowell were so ruined, they both had to leave their respective towns and move to Washington, DC.

It is true both men moved to Washington, DC, and they both died there. Each man could have had legitimate reasons for moving to Washington, DC. In the case of Judge Payson, he served many terms in Congress in Washington, so he may have decided to retire in that city.

In the case of Judge McDowell, his wife had relatives living in the Washington, DC area. There are several Fairbury Blade stories where Judge McDowell and his wife

traveled back and forth from Fairbury to Washington, DC, before they finally moved there.

Based upon published newspaper accounts and legal documents, Judge Payson's reputation probably was damaged. He was sued by the heirs of Franklin Oliver, and the heirs won the suit in the Illinois Supreme Court.

The author assumes that back in the 1890s, lawyers were probably as unpopular with the general public, as they are today. Fairbury citizens were probably aware that Judge McDowell did legal work for the colorful Franklin Oliver. Once the lawsuit against Judge Payson started receiving publicity, Fairbury citizens may have suspected that Judge McDowell took advantage of Franklin Oliver also.

In reality, we will probably never know if Judge McDowell's reputation was really damaged by the Franklin Oliver scandal or not. There are no published accounts or legal documents that support this allegation by Alma Lewis James in her book *Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars*.

CHAPTER 26

1897

At the beginning of this year, Revilo Oliver Sr. was 44 years old and living with his 64 year-old mother, Amaretta Smith–Oliver in Chatsworth. Revilo Oliver Sr. was also the mayor of Chatsworth at that time.

In the summer of that year, a very attractive 30 year old blonde woman visited Chatsworth. Local newspapers described her as “an adventuress woman”. Her maiden name was Maude Swope and her married name was Maude Barlow. Mrs. Barlow quickly befriended Revilo Oliver Sr. and his mother.

This relationship culminated with Revilo Oliver Sr. marrying Mrs. Maud Barlow in October. The October 22, 1897 Chatsworth Plaindealer published the story below about Maude and the wedding.

Oliver-Barlow, on Thursday afternoon October 21, at Pontiac, County judge Barrickmann united in marriage, Mrs. Maude J. Barlow, of Bloomington, and Mr. Revilo Oliver, of this city. Mrs. Barlow has become quite familiar to some of our people in the business ways in the past few months, having been interested in the land in the southern part of the state for which Mr. Oliver traded his town properties here a few weeks ago, and as a consequence she has been in Chatsworth at intervals during the summer and fall. Mr. Oliver has a record and reputation of his own, and needs no comments in these columns. Their friends extend congratulations and good wishes.

Wedding Did Not Last

Unfortunately, the wedding did not go as Revilo planned per the Streator Free Press article of October 29, 1897, shown below.

WANTS A DIVORCE

Married Less Than a Week and Finds His Wife Too Gay

Last Thursday Revilo Oliver, mayor of Chatsworth, was a happy and ardent lover, soaring with an unquenchable desire to be everlastingly mated with the object of his devotion, a brilliant blonde of seductive form and features and a mind sharp as a razor and clever as a Philadelphia lawyer, worldly accomplishments which were acquired by rubbing up against some of the smoothest talent on the turf and in brisk circles. Maude Barlow by name. The two were brought together, and nothing would satisfy either except an instant union, says the Pontiac Daily Leader, and Judge Barrickmann tied and knotted the two in matrimony according to the most approved forms of law. To show how disinterested were her motives the bride, who is from Bloomington and was reported to be worth anywhere from \$100,000 to a million dollars, proposed that a contract providing that each divide her or his property with the other be drawn and filed previous to marriage.

The groom, Revilo Oliver, who is really worth about \$100,000, was ready to agree to this or any other conditions short of yielding up his life. The contract was filed and it was the most remarkable ante-nuptial agreement ever recorded in Illinois. It is given in full in this article.

The groom then departed with the bride a happy man. He was happy just one day. His bride went to Bloomington, consorted with her old associates, and as

he alleges, committed the unpardonable sin, most unbecoming to the bride of a day.

Now, less than a week after the happy wedding, the groom is one of the most miserable of men, and is consumed with a fierce desire to break asunder the bonds of matrimony by any means and at any cost. His eyes have been pried open so ruthlessly, his idol having been shattered, he prays for a divorce and for a dissolution of the ante-nuptial contract.

Wednesday morning Messrs. Barr & Pollock, of Bloomington, attorneys for Oliver, filed a bill charging his wife with adultery with a number of persons in Bloomington the day after her marriage to Oliver, and asking that her marriage be declared null and void, and that all conveyances of property be set aside.

In the afternoon Judge Moffet granted the bill and declared the marriage of Revilo Oliver and Maude Barlow null and void, and ordered that the ante-nuptial contract be set aside, and that all the property revert to the original owner. Attorney Gillespie, who appeared for Maude Barlow, agreed to the decision and it is final.

Thus within a week Revilo Oliver had loved, married and transferred one-half of his property to the object of his adoration, and changed his love to contempt, was granted a divorce and had his property restored to him. It is possible that this last experience will effectually cure Mr. Oliver of the matrimonial habit.

WHAT MAUD SAYS

" I have never deceived him, not for a moment, and they can never beat me in a thousand years." Thus spoke Mrs. Maud Barlow Wednesday afternoon to a representative of the Bloomington Bulletin.

"I have never deceived him and here are my proofs," and she handed the reporter a contract signed by Mr. Oliver and herself and witnessed by the cashier of the Bank of Chatsworth, in which each agreed for all future time to forego all sporting pleasures and gambling unless mutually consented to by both parties to the contract.

"I told Mr. Oliver" continued Mrs. Barlow, "that I did not want to marry unless I could better myself, for I had a nice little home of my own and had been accustomed to plenty of money and I was very much afraid he would think me very extravagant for \$50 was not much money for me to spend at one time. But he protested that if I did not marry him, he would kill himself, for he could not live without me and that I could have what money I wanted. This is why we made the contract that we should divide the property. I wanted something that would give me an income of my own as I was accustomed to.

"I told him, too, that when I married him that I had but one piece of property in my own right and he said that would make no difference for he would rather I had nothing at all and would love me all the more if I was a servant girl."

"How could he be deceived when I was up there regularly for three months twice a week and I have three witnesses there in Chatsworth that will swear they warned him that I was a sporting woman and one of them only the day previous to our wedding that I was a sporting woman. I had a stable of horses and had squandered \$200,000 in that business and how could he think me a society woman and follow such a business."

"I am well aware that I am not a society woman but have always been given credit for having good sense and he has not got a scratch of a pen to show that I ever

deceived him. I also dictated this agreement and the contract myself. That don't look like deceiving him does it? And, too, he could have come here to see me and when he was here yesterday he begged his lawyers to let him come, but they would not. I think Mr. Oliver is all right, but there are others back of him. He begged and pleaded with me to marry him and his mother said if I did not make up my mind to do so he would go crazy. I think he will make a good settlement and rather than have trouble I will settle with him."

Fraud Scheme

Revilo Oliver Sr. became convinced that Mrs. Maude Barlow schemed with T. S. Willhite to steal his land and he filed a lawsuit. The Pantagraph published an article on July 17, 1900, about this lawsuit.

Evidence in Oliver-Willhite Case, Burned in the Fire, Now Being Reproduced

—The evidence which has been taken in the case of Revilo Oliver vs. T. S. Willhite, et al., was all in the office of Judge Tipton before the fire. It was not in the safe and was destroyed. Fortunately the stenographer who took the evidence had saved her note books and it can be replaced from them, although the task of copying it is a big one. This is the celebrated Oliver case which attracted so much attention about two years ago.

Miss Louis Gillett of Fairbury, who is the stenographer in the office of Mr. Carrithers, the master in chancery in Pontiac, and who took the evidence in the case, was here yesterday dictating it to another stenographer from her notes. She has thirty books of notes which will make nearly 2,000 typewritten pages. She will remain here until Thursday evening, but will not get through with the dictating by that time, so will have to return again.

The evidence commenced July 26, 1897, and has been taken at intervals ever since. The statement of the case briefly told is that T. S. Willhite and Maud J. Barlow are said to have gone into partnership to cheat Revilo Oliver out of his property. They traded him 880 acres of land in Richland county for about \$40,000 worth of Chatsworth property and a quarter of a section of land in Nebraska.

Maud Barlow and Oliver were married, being divorced the next day. He then filed a bill to set aside the sale and get back his property. The case is said to be one of the most carefully laid conspiracies to defraud a man out of his property that has ever been heard of here. The evidence had nearly all been taken. It will take about a day to finish it. As soon as it can be reproduced the case will probably be tried. That will be some time this fall.

Court Rules Against Revilo Oliver Sr.

The January 5, 1901, Pantagraph published the story below about the resolution of this case.

AGAINST MRS. BARLOW

Master-in-Chancery Decision in Famous Revilo Oliver Case at Pontiac

—A Pantagraph special from Pontiac says:

The case of Revilo Oliver against T. S. Willhite et al was argued before the master in chancery a greater portion of the day Thursday and Thursday evening. Judge Tipton, of Bloomington, and Judge Beach, of Piper City, for Oliver, and Capt. J. H. Rowell and James S. Neville, of Bloomington; Joseph E. Dyar, of Paris; Strawn & Strawn, A. C. Norton and Judge Wallace were the counsel.

Master in Chancery Carrithers rendered his decision immediately at the close. He decided that there was no fraud in the deal between Willhite and Oliver as would warrant a court of chancery in interfering. He found that Maud J. Barlow owed Oliver \$4,000 and recommended judgment against her for that amount.

It will be remembered that this case grew out of an alleged conspiracy in which Maud Barlow gained the confidence of Revilo Oliver and drew him into marriage and into a deal whereby he traded nearly all of his real estate in and near Chatsworth for 800 acres of land in Richmond county. The Chatsworth property was sold by Willhite to various parties, among whom were James A. Smith, W. E. Baker, Frank Ford, Dr. C. C. Searight, George McCabe, and John Dorsey, all of Chatsworth. Oliver soon found that he had been swindled, and at

once began proceedings to set the trade aside and to get his property back. He also began proceedings for a divorce from Maud Barlow.

The testimony had all been typewritten and made 2,000 pages, and the case was very elaborately argued.

The case will now go to the court for final decision, and if the master in chancery's recommendations are sustained it will finally confirm the purchasers in their title to the property unless the case is carried to the higher courts.

Illinois Supreme Court

Revilo Oliver appealed this case to the State of Illinois Supreme Court. In 1903, the Supreme Court agreed with the Livingston County court's verdict, and Revilo Oliver lost the case. After losing the case, Revilo Oliver Sr. failed to pay his lawyers per the Gibson City Courier article published on August 14, 1903, shown below.

—Revilo Oliver, of Chatsworth, is not content without a lawsuit on his hands. When not suing someone he is being sued. This time the firm of Tipton & Tipton, of Bloomington, are after him. They want a thousand dollars for their services rendered Oliver in the case of Oliver vs. Willhite. Oliver got beat but lawyers have to be paid whether they win or lose. —Pontiac Free Trader

Mrs. Barlow

Maude Swope's life story is very difficult to determine. On the marriage certificate for her wedding to Revilo Oliver Sr., she listed her birth year as 1868 and she was 29 years of age. She listed her father as John Swope (1809-1886) and her mother as Elmyra Stiger (1826-1914).

The John Swope family initially lived in McLean, Illinois. They moved and settled in Hudson, Illinois, north of Bloomington. John and Elmyra Swope had a large family of 11 children.

In the 1870 U.S. Census, Maude should have been shown as being two years old and living with her parents. The Census shows John and Elmyra Swope living with their children Augusta, Margaret, John H., Samuel C., Julia, Arthur, Ella, and Abraham. Maude is not listed on this census.

In the 1880 Census, Maude is also not listed as living with her mother and siblings. No record of Maude Swope's marriage to Mr. Barlow could be found. The Pantagraph has no record of her activities while she lived in Bloomington.

In the 1910 U.S. Census, there is a 43 year-old Maud Oliver living in Chicago. She gave her birth date as 1867 in Indiana. She listed her marital status as widowed. She rented a home at 3132 Prairie Avenue. She reported that she was head of the household and was an employer. Thirty-eight year-old Edna Ewing lived with her. Martin Myer and Marie Myer also lived at that address. Maud Oliver reported her occupation as a masseuse.

No additional records of Maud Swope's life could be found. Her death date and burial location could not be found.

In the lawsuit between Revilo Oliver Sr. and his sister that was decided in the 1919 Illinois Supreme Court, his sister alleged that Maude was a prostitute.

CHAPTER 27

1900

Franklin Oliver died in 1881. One of his surviving family members likely submitted the information contained in his biography in the 1900 Livingston County history book. This biography includes a photo of Revilo Oliver and Gertie Ross.

FRANKLIN OLIVER.

Franklin Oliver, deceased, was numbered among the pioneer settlers of Livingston county, locating in what is now known as Oliver's Grove, about five miles south of Chatsworth. He was born in Bordentown, New Jersey, April 8, 1786, and by profession was a civil engineer and surveyor, and was following that occupation at the breaking out of the war of 1812. He enlisted in the service almost as soon as war was proclaimed and served through it with distinction. He was at one time employed as general manager for Joseph Bonaparte, ex-king of Spain, a brother of the great Napoleon the First.

He was married three times, his first wife being Hannah L. Ruckle, a native of New Jersey, whom he married in 1819. She bore him five children, as follows: Edward R., who served as a private soldier in the Mexican war, and was also a captain in the Confederate service during the civil war. He now resides in Corpus Christi, Texas, where he owns Montreal ranch, consisting of twenty thousand acres, and is one of the wealthy men of that region; Elias B., who is a surveyor residing near Topeka, Kansas; Helen and Franklin C, who are both deceased, and James, who is a civil engineer, and is engaged in engineering and mining at Ophir, California.

In 1833 Franklin Oliver came with his family to Livingston County, Illinois, settling, as already stated, in

Oliver's Grove, which continued to be his home until his death. He was one of the first county surveyors of Livingston county, and selected and surveyed all the swamp land in the county. He also became the owner of four thousand acres of choice land in Livingston and adjoining counties, but never actively engaged in farming, the land being only used for pasturing during his lifetime.

John Oliver, the father of Franklin Oliver, was born and educated in Dublin, Ireland. He emigrated to this country sometime prior to the Revolutionary War, in which he served as quartermaster-general. He was a warm friend of Benjamin Franklin, who at one time gave him a portrait of himself, being one of only three that were ever made. It was painted by Francis Hopkins [misspelling of Hopkinson], one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The family yet have that portrait in their possession, and it goes without question to say that it is highly prized. John Oliver was the pioneer of the Oliver family who settled in Bordentown, New Jersey.

For his second wife Franklin Oliver married Sarah Wert, in 1846, who was born in Illinois, and by this union there was one daughter, Caroline, now the wife of Theodore Dorr, residing in Livingston county.

For his third wife he married Amaretta Smith, in 1850, who was born in Oswego county, New York, March 6, 1833. Her father, Luther L. Smith, was born in Westminster, Vermont, and married Amaretta Fellows, who was a daughter of Captain Fellows, of war fame. His father, Luther Smith, was also born in Vermont, where he married Love Leavitt, of Vermont, whose mother was Love Howard, and whose grandparents achieved fame by coming over in the Mayflower.

Luther L. Smith came to Livingston county when Mrs. Oliver was a small child. He settled on what is known as Smith's Mound, north of Pontiac, and which is the highest elevation in the county. The maternal grandfather of Mrs. Oliver, Captain Fellows, who served in the Revolutionary War, went into the service as a teamster when very young, and was promoted to a captaincy during the war. His father was Colonel Fellows, who held that title during the Revolutionary war. Captain Fellows married Miss Anna Grant, of Old Hartford, Connecticut, relative of General Grant.

Adelia Smith, a sister of Mrs. Oliver, was the first lady teacher in Pontiac, teaching school in the old court house. She was a very talented lady, and the belle of Livingston county. She is now the wife of Horace Scripture, of Oswego, New York.

Adaline Smith, who died young. was also a school teacher and a minister in the Methodist church. She was a fine public speaker. Jerome B. Smith lives on the old homestead on Smith's Mound, where he owns about six hundred acres of well improved land. Solomon J. Smith is now living retired near Chicago. Niles was a soldier in the civil war, and served until the end. He later went to Oklahoma where he died in 1895.

To Franklin and Amaretta Oliver were born three children: Revilo, John L. and Florence. Revilo, ex-mayor of Chatsworth, the famous song composer, author of "Soldiers of the Maine." the great Spanish-American war song; "The Hero of Manila," the famous Dewey song; "Nineteen Hundred Years Ago," a Christmas song and chorus relating to the Savior of the world; "The Volunteers," a war song and chorus, representing the largest army in the world, and other beautiful songs and poems. He has the distinction of being both an author and inventor, a characteristic seldom found in one person. He inherits his Christian

and poetic nature from his mother, who is a noble, Christian woman, and a great financier.

His family consists of his mother and his little niece. Miss Gertie Ross, whose photograph appears in this work. She is a bright little girl of considerable oratorical ability, to whom the poet is very much attached.

He also has the distinction of being the first and only person in the world who bears the name of Revilo, which is considered by many to be the sweetest and prettiest name known to the English language, being a new name originating with his father, from whom he inherits his mechanical ingenuity. One thing that makes him locally famous is the peculiarity of his name.

Revilo, when read backwards spells Oliver, and Oliver when read backwards spells Revilo. He is a natural orator and a good judge of law and equity, and, like most all poets, he is endowed with a genial, kindhearted and sympathetic nature, but when thoroughly aroused by injustice he is unyielding and of a warlike disposition.

He is styled Revilo, the Christian poet, because there is something about his compositions that reminds one of the other world. His songs and poems are sad, but beautiful. They have a sublimity of thought and a tenderness of feeling that touches the heart of everyone.

John L., who is residing on part of the home farm, is a successful agriculturist and raiser of blooded stock, is married, and has five children—Ralph, Daisy, Arthur, Orville and Oma. Florence is the wife of Thomas Ross, and they now reside in Lake Village, Indiana. He is a farmer, and also a horse trainer and track driver. They have four children—Gertie, Charles, Joseph R. and Murrell D. The first named makes her home with her uncle Revilo and her grandmother Oliver, and is a bright and talented young elocutionist.

Ann Oliver, a sister of Franklin Oliver, was a natural artist, and some of her work is in possession of the family at the present time. She is buried at Pontiac, where she distinguished herself during the cholera epidemic of 1848 by taking care of a number of afflicted ones, who all recovered, but she herself was taken with the dread disease and her life was thus offered a sacrifice to others.

Franklin Oliver, after a long and useful life, died September 19, 1881. His widow, Mrs. Amaretta Oliver, survives him, and now makes her home in the city of Chatsworth, where she owns a fine residence. She is also the owner of over eleven hundred acres of choice farm land in Livingston county, from which she derives a handsome income.



REVILO OLIVER.



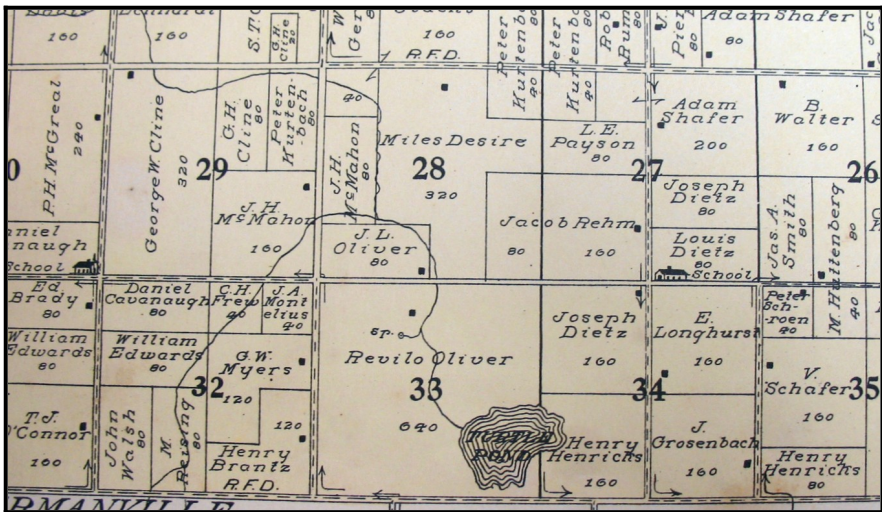
MISS GERTIE ROSS.

The Author's Little Niece.

CHAPTER 28

1911

The 1911 Livingston County Atlas shows the land owned by Revilo Oliver. Note that Judge L. E. Payson no longer owns the land just north of Oliver's Grove.



CHAPTER 29

1919

After Franklin Oliver's death in 1881, some of his heirs remained in court battles over his land for almost 50 years.

Revilo Oliver Sr. (1853-1929) was one of Franklin and Amaretta Oliver's sons. After his father's death, Revilo lived with his mother and took care of her affairs.

The main focus of this book is on the life of Franklin Oliver. One could probably write another separate book about the life of Revilo Oliver.

One of the legal disputes Revilo was involved with was against his sister, Florence Oliver – Ross. They were fighting each other about land owned by their mother Amaretta Oliver after her death in 1908.

This legal battle ended up in the Illinois Supreme Court. The November 14, 1919, Fairbury Blade newspaper had a summary which explained the very complicated case.

IS CASE OF UNUSUAL INTEREST

Supreme Court's Decision

A case of more than usual interest was recently decided by the Supreme Court. The opinion is in the hands of Schneider & Schneider, attorneys for Revilo Oliver in a case entitled Revilo Oliver vs. Florence Ross et al. It has been pending in the courts for a period of five years and C. S. Schneider had charge of taking practically all the evidence covering over three thousand pages.

Depositions were taken by him in Oklahoma, Texas, Illinois, and Indiana.

The case involved some twelve hundred acres of land in Livingston county, Illinois, which at one time was owned by Revilo Oliver and his mother, Amaretta Oliver. Amaretta Oliver was the widow of Franklin Oliver, a soldier in the War of 1812, and was at one time as a surveyor in the employ of a brother of Napoleon Bonaparte. It will be remembered that one of Napoleon's brothers emigrated to the United States after Napoleon himself was sent to St. Helena, and it was on his plantation that Franklin Oliver was engaged as a surveyor.

Franklin Oliver will be remembered by a number of our older citizens as having lived at Oliver's Grove, a sort of stopping place in the early day for emigrants. Many weird stories were told concerning persons stopping at Oliver's Grove but never went any further. As to the truth of these statements we are not informed, but our older residents will remember them very distinctly.

Franklin Oliver died in 1881 without any property, but at one time owned 4,000 acres of land. He had very much litigation with references to the land, having been in the supreme court a number of times, once with ex-congressman Payson, in which it is understood that Mr. Payson secured some 1,800 acres of land.

After the death of Franklin Oliver, Revilo Oliver, the oldest son remained with his mother, and together they accumulated some 1,200 acres of land, the title sometimes being in the mother and sometimes in Revilo. There were two other children, John Oliver and Florence Ross. John and Florence both married at an early age, and Revilo remained at home with his mother, assisting in the accumulation of the property.

Some eight or ten years ago while Revilo and his mother were living at Chatsworth a beautiful adventuress giving her name as Maude Barlow, appeared at the home of Revilo and his mother at Chatsworth and pretended to be a real estate agent. She had back of her a lawyer in Bloomington who is now dead, and some very prominent men in Chatsworth and she soon gained the confidence of Revilo and his mother, and as a result a marriage was proposed between the adventuress and Revilo. However, she refused to marry Mr. Oliver unless the mother would convey all the land which she owned to Revilo. Saying that her brothers held a large tract of land for her in trust and that they would not reconvey it to her unless she married a man who also owned a large tract of land, she succeeded in her nefarious scheme, the deal was made by the mother to Revilo and the marriage took place. But immediately thereafter the beautiful adventuress returned to Bloomington where she held forth.

After this adventure Revilo and his mother moved to Iowa Park, Texas, and there lived a secluded life away from their past troubles. Revilo, being somewhat of a poet, advertised in a St. Louis paper for some woman who had the ability to set his poetry to music. The advertisement was answered by a woman who afterwards became Revilo's wife, she having gone to Iowa Falls, Texas, and a short time thereafter she and Revilo were married.

At that time Florence Ross, the sister, lived in Indiana and immediately upon hearing about the marriage went to Iowa Falls, Texas, and there through fraud, deceit, and lying, obtained deeds from her mother for practically all the land in Livingston county to herself and her brother John Oliver. She made Revilo and her mother believe that the present wife of Revilo was another adventuress of the type of Maude Oliver, and that she was another member of the old gang that had

defrauded them before. Shortly after receiving the deeds Florence Ross placed them on record in Livingston county and Amaretta Oliver used every effort to secure the return of the deeds. But to no avail.

After a few months of worry concerning the property the old lady died leaving Revilo without any means at all, and Florence Ross, the sister, permitted her mother to be buried in the little out of the way place, in almost a pauper's grave.

After the death of his mother, Revilo Oliver came to Illinois and employed the firm of Schneider & Schneider to set aside the deeds fraudulently obtained by his sister. And a long, hard fight was begun. Mrs. Ross in the meantime employed W. R. Hunter of Kankakee, and John Allion employed Adist & Thompson, of Pontiac. The case came on a hearing before the master in chancery at Pontiac and he decided that all deeds obtained by Florence Ross should be set aside and held for naught so that Revilo Oliver, John Oliver, and Florence Ross each received a third of the property.

The case was taken to Judge Harris, who reversed the finding of the master in chancery and permitted the deeds obtained by Florence Ross to stand.

On appeal to the supreme court of Illinois this opinion was reversed and the findings of the master in chancery sustained.

So that now Revilo Oliver and his wife have secured some four hundred acres of land. What will be the end and outcome of this litigation no one will be able to conjecture. Some member of the Oliver family has been in litigation continuously since 1870. In looking over the voluminous record of the case it is apparent that some evil genius has been following the footsteps of this

ill-fated family. The opinion of the supreme court is very long, covering some twenty pages and it is a record of a family history which is interesting and a warning to all families who refuse to live in harmony.

Death of Revilo Oliver Sr.

The March 19, 1929, Murphysboro, Illinois newspaper published the following story.

Probe Aged Man's Death

SPRINGFIELD, ILL.—Coroner Ernest Dye today, was conducting an inquest into the death of Revilo Oliver, about 76, whose body was found hanging in the basement of his home here Saturday. Oliver, apparently a suicide, left a note saying that his troubles were over. Despondency is believed to have caused the act.

Spending most of his life in court arguing about his father's land holdings apparently took its toll on the life of Revilo Oliver.

CHAPTER 30

1922

A February 27, 1946, Pantagraph article recounted how Franklin Oliver's grandson bought back 520 acres of the original Franklin Oliver land.

February 27, 1946

OLIVER GROVE FARM

Indians Helped Pioneer

Chatsworth Man Owns 520 Acres of Original Land

CHATSWORTH. — Around a campfire one night in 1829, it is said, a white man and a band of Kickapoo Indians smoked the peace pipe in the pleasant wooded hills of what is now southern Livingston county. There a friendship started. It was one that was never broken and it led to establishment of one of Livingston county's most historic farms—the Oliver Grove farm.

The white man who shared the peace pipe and became the first to settle in that area among Kickapoos was Franklin Oliver. He died in 1881 at the age of 112.

Now Retired

Title to his 4,000 acres passed out of the family several years after his death. But a grandson, Orville O. Oliver, came back from Oklahoma in 1922 to buy back 520 acres of his grandfather's original estate. Today, Orville O. Oliver is still living on this land, but has retired from active farming. This week is his first as a "farmer of leisure."

Family history has it that Franklin Oliver's friendship with the Indians started while he and his family were en-route from New Jersey to California. They stopped for the night in the timber to find themselves surrounded by the Kickapoos. There was no white men for miles around.

While Mr. Oliver made signs of friendship, Mrs. Oliver cooked supper. After a pow wow around the fire, the Indians passed the peace pipe. Mr. Oliver was not in the habit of smoking but this time he didn't refuse.

The white man thought his new friends might become hostile if he tried to leave so he stayed to gain their confidence. He grew fond of the hilly timber and built a log cabin. The Indians helped him. And in later years, when other settlers fled, fearing an uprising the Oliver's stayed unharmed on their land.

Sought Only Timberland

Buying only timberland, Mr. Oliver's 4,000 acres were in the area now included in Fayette, Chatsworth, and Germantown townships. Many of the early homes of his neighbors were built from timber cut on his land.

Orville Oliver was born in a house built by his father, Franklin's son, on one of the tracts left in the family after Franklin's death. This house still stands.

The family later moved west. After serving in World War I, Orville Oliver tried an alfalfa farm in Oklahoma. A series of crop failures there caused him to return to Illinois and in March, 1922, he started farming on the place where he was born.

In 1934 he bought the 80 acres from the company which had taken title to them during the depression. Nine years

later he bought an additional 440 acres of the original Oliver land across the road.

Sell Cattle, Horses

Mr. and Mrs. Oliver moved then to the modern home in which they will continue to live. At the sale last week they disposed of most of the Aberdeen-Angus cattle and the Belgian horses for which the farm had been noted in recent years.

Both his father and his grandfather were lovers of good horses, said Mr. Oliver, and another ancestor was reported to have traded six times while in town one day and to have come home with the same horse he started with.

Interest in horses is still evident on the Oliver farm. In recent years the present owner has been raising Belgians, several of which were sold last week.

There are also good riding horses on the place. One of them, Miss Sensation, is from the same lines that produced Sea-biscuit and Man-O-War.



CHATSWORTH. Mr. and Mrs. Orville O. Oliver own and live on 520 acres of the original 4,000 acre Oliver estate bought by Franklin, Orville Oliver's grandfather

CHAPTER 31

1947

The Pantagraph published two stories regarding a plan to make Turtle Pond south of Chatsworth into a recreational area. The first story appeared in the October 22, 1947 issue.

Pantagraph

Chatsworth Groups Seek Recreation Lake Area

Arends, Osborne, Lantz to Discuss Project at Stag

CHATSWORTH. — (PNS) Rep. Leslie Arends, State Conservator Director Livingston Osborne and State Senator Simon E. Lantz, will speak on an Oliver Lake project stag party at 7 p.m. Thursday in Germanville Town hall.

Purpose of the meeting is to discuss acquisition of the Turtle Pond area for conversion into a lake and park. The land is owned by Mr. and Mrs. O. O. Oliver. Mr. Oliver is the grandson of Franklin O. Oliver, one of the first settlers in this community.

Sen. Lantz and Mr. Osborne plan to make an inspection of the proposed park site Thursday afternoon, it was reported.

The project is being supported by Walter Clemens post 613, American Legion, and by the Lions club, Community club, Sportsman's club and Legion posts in nearby towns.

The second article appeared in the October 24, 1947 newspaper.

Pantagraph

Chatsworth Lake Project Gets Official Support

Osborne Says Lake Can Become 'A Reality'

CHATSWORTH. — Livingston Osborne, director of the Illinois department of conservation, told more than 500 residents of Livingston and Ford counties, including many government officials, Thursday night that he believed the Oliver lake and park would become a reality. He said, however, that he could not promise it.

He pointed out that although the state engineer's report was not complete, so far it was entirely favorable. He further said that the project must be approved by the Post War Planning commission and then must get Governor Green's signature.

Cash Approves

Among those who spoke at the meeting and promised to give all possible aid to the project were Simon Lantz, State Senator from Congerville, State Representative Calistus Bruer of Pontiac, and State Representative James Lannon of Saunemin.

State Senator Wilbur Cash of Towanda visited the area Friday afternoon and gave his support to the project. Leslie Arends, U. S. representative, arrived at the meeting too late for the speeches, but voiced his approval of the plan.

Judge Ray Sesler of Pontiac also pledged his support.

Clubs Sponsor Meeting

The meeting held at the Germanville Town hall, five miles south of Chatsworth was a stag affair sponsored by the Walter Clemons Post 613, American Legion at Chatsworth and the Chatsworth Community club, Lion's club and Sportsman's club.

Willis Pearson, past commander of the Chatsworth Legion, and Clae E. Kohler, supervisor of Chatsworth township presided at the meeting.

The lake commonly called Turtle lake or pond, is a part of the estate of Franklin Oliver who was the first settler in the Chatsworth community. He came here in 1829.

O. O. Oliver of Chatsworth, one of the heirs of the estate, was at the meeting and said that the project had his wholehearted support, if a real lake that would hold water would result from the project.



CHATSWORTH. Site for the proposed Oliver Lake and park project is this 80 acre water area five miles south of Chatsworth. Area is part of estate founded by Franklin Oliver in 1829.

This proposed project was never completed.

CHAPTER 32

1964

Franklin Oliver made the national newspapers in 1880 when at the age of 94 he proposed marriage to a 30 year old Saybrook woman.

Eighty-four years later, in 1964, his grandson made the national newspapers.

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated and killed in November of 1963.

In February of 1964, Professor Revilo Pendleton Oliver from the University of Illinois wrote an uncomplimentary article about deceased President Kennedy for the John Birch Society. The title of the article was *Marxmanship in Dallas*.

Professor Revilo Oliver (1908-1994) was the son of Revilo Oliver Sr. (1853-1929). Revilo Oliver Sr. was the son of Franklin Oliver and Amaretta Smith.

The article which appeared in the Warren, Pennsylvania, Times Mirror newspaper on February 26, 1964, was typical of the national news coverage given to his topic.

Is "American Opinion" un-American? The University of Illinois seems to think so. With the full backing of his board of trustees, University of Illinois President David D. Henry has asked a faculty committee on academic freedom and tenure to review the case of a professor who wrote an uncomplimentary article about the late President Kennedy in "American Opinion," the monthly publication of the John Birch Society.

In his article, Illinois Professor Revilo P. Oliver said, among other things, that President Kennedy had arranged a fake invasion of Cuba [In 1961] designed to strengthen our mortal enemies there and collaborated with Soviet Premier Khrushchev in a phony embargo in 1962 to provide a cover for the transfer of Soviet troops and weapons to Cuba to be used against the United States.

President Kennedy, according to Professor Oliver, did much for the Communist cause but his actions were not keeping pace with the scheduled date for the "effective capture of the United States" in 1963 and he was "rapidly becoming a political liability." Hence his murder was arranged by "the Communist conspiracy" to make way for "a domestic take-over." As a capping insult, Mr. Oliver observed that Mr. Kennedy's "memory will be cherished with distaste."

Looked at from any angle, these comments can only be regarded as patent nonsense and beneath the notice of any but the few who make up "American Opinions" mesmerized readers. Such views can only be explained by assuming that the author, a professor of classics, has kept his head buried in antiquity and has never taken a clear look at the modern world.

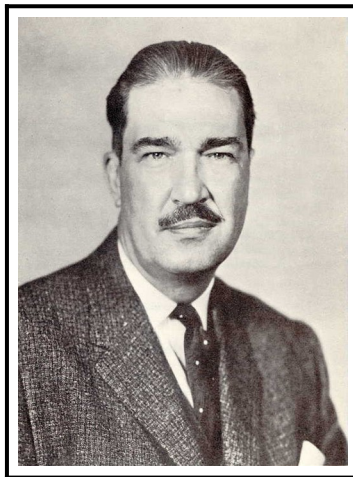
But however absurd Professor Oliver's political views may be, this does not mean he should be penalized for writing them. We do not believe in curbing the freedom of the press of Birchers, even though they themselves would curb the freedom of others. The best antidote for Birchers is the deluded image which they project through their writings. The appropriate subject for the Illinois faculty committee to investigate, if they must inquire, is Professor Oliver's competence as a classics teacher. They shouldn't be looking into "American Opinion" for evidence on that.

The Warren Commissioner

Because there was so many rumors and conspiracy theories about the assassination of President Kennedy, President Johnson set up the Warren Commission to determine who killed John F. Kennedy.

Because of the notoriety Professor Revilo P. Oliver received from his allegations in the John Birch publication, he was called to testify to the Warren Commission on September 9, 1964, in Washington, D.C. His testimony can be reviewed at <https://tinyurl.com/3mn3v8wz>.

The Warren Commission concluded that President Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald and that Oswald acted entirely alone. It also concluded that Jack Ruby acted alone when he killed Oswald two days later. The Commission's findings have proven controversial and have been both challenged and supported by later studies.



Professor
Revilo P. Oliver - University of Illinois

YouTube Video of 1968 Speech by Professor Oliver

On June 9, 1968, in Hamburg, New York, Professor Revilo P. Oliver gave a one hour and 15 minute speech titled **“What We Owe Our Parasites.”**

Someone recorded the audio from this speech and converted it to a YouTube video. This video can be accessed at <https://YouTube/IRiRH-0nk2g>.



Committed Suicide Like His Father

In 1929, at the age of 75, Revilo Oliver Sr. committed suicide by hanging himself in the basement of his Springfield, Illinois, home. At the time of his death, his wife, Flora Oliver, was 51 years old. His son, Revilo P. Oliver, was 21 years of age.

Sixty-five years later in 1994, eighty-six year old Professor Revilo P. Oliver was suffering from leukemia and severe emphysema. Professor Oliver committed suicide at his home in Urbana, Illinois, per a web site article that can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/dk5pyps>.

At the time of Professor Oliver's death, his wife, Alice Grace Needham, was 91 years old. They had been married 64 years. Alice Grace Needham died on April 26, 1997, in Savoy, Illinois, when she was 94 years old. Professor Oliver had no children.

No Champaign or Urbana newspaper articles could be found about the death of Professor Revilo P. Oliver. Local obituaries are often not published when the deceased person is relatively old and there are no surviving children.

An obituary was written by Mark Weber in the Journal of Historical Review periodical. It can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/yz6bvtmk>.

CHAPTER 33

1969

The July 3, 1969 edition of the Gibson City Courier contained a story about the Ottawa Trail going through Oliver's Grove.

Ottawa Trail CAR Society, Receives Award

The Ottawa Trail Society, Children of the American Revolution, has received a Certificate of Award for the work they have done since they organized two years ago. They have acquired eight new members, sent clothing, jewelry, and coupons to the DAR schools, sponsored the ringing of "Bells for Freedom" each Fourth of July, arranged window displays of old flags and bells in the Melvin State Bank and in the Melvin and Piper City libraries, planted a tree in the Piper City Park and in Melvin Railroad Park, and are now helping their senior president, Adelaide Dixon, compile a large scrapbook for Melvin Library which contains a history of Ford County, its towns and townships.

Before naming their society the members searched old atlases and interviewed older citizens of Melvin, Walltown, and Chatsworth. They learned that the Ottawa Trail was an old covered wagon road (1828) running from Danville to Ottawa. It followed quite closely the South Fork of the Vermilion River. Pioneers used it to travel from Ohio and Indiana to find homes in the newly opened lands of Northern Illinois.

Favorite campsites of the travelers were Sugar Grove at the south edge of Button Township, where an abundance of fuel and water could be found. From there it led to Trickle near where the city of Paxton is now located. It crossed the Illinois Central railroad at the

southern limits of Paxton, where one of the streets is named Ottawa Road for the old trail. The next stop was Ten Mile Grove; then through Wall township and Peach Orchard Township to another favorite camping place at Oliver's Grove, north of Melvin.

Franklin Oliver had settled there in 1820 after making friends with the Kickapoo Indians. He had a large underground barn and again plenty of fuel and water. From Oliver's Grove the trail led on to Pontiac and then to Ottawa.

At the close of the Civil War when land was being offered cheap to anyone who wanted to settle in Ford County, the Ottawa Trail was the main route of travel for emigrants, many of whom had passed through Ford County as children when their parents had moved from the east to Northern Illinois.

The members decided Ottawa Trail would be a good name for their new society. Each summer the society has a picnic in Oliver's Grove near the ruts of the old Ottawa Trail. The society now has 15 members between the ages of 8 and 18.

Error in the Article

Per the 1878 Livingston County History Book, Franklin Oliver did not arrive in what is now the Chatsworth area until 1832. Apparently this club was not aware of the existence of this book back in 1969.

CHAPTER 34

2005 to 2009

Starting in 2005, at least 15 newspaper articles were published by local media about an ambitious development project on the land formerly in the estate of Franklin Oliver.

One of the first articles about this new proposed development was in the April 23, 2005 Pantagraph.

April 23, 2005

Chatsworth farmer wants to use 80 acres for homes, lake

CHATSWORTH — Local farmer Ken Kurtenbach envisions turning more than 80 acres of farmland into an upscale housing development featuring a new lake, and he says it can be a property tax bonanza for the community.

Kurtenbach put local rumors to rest this week when he made a formal proposal asking the Chatsworth City Council to annex the land two miles south of U.S. 24 and three-quarters of a mile west of town. The project would need city sewers to work, he said.

If the land is annexed, Kurtenbach and his family propose developing a 38-acre lake which will be surrounded by 92 half-acre lots. Once completed, the homes would be valued between \$300,000 to \$400,000, he said.

"Taxes on these 80 acres brought \$238 to the Prairie Central school district this year," said Kurtenbach. "If this area was developed with 80 homes, the school,

could get between \$400,000 to \$613,000, and the city would receive \$164,000. It's getting nothing now."

Kurtenbach said he believes the development could bring an additional 340 people to Chatsworth, which has about 1,300 residents now.

Oliver's Crossing, the proposed subdivision, would be named for Franklin Oliver, Ken's great-great-grand-father. The homesteader who eventually owned 6,000 acres arrived in 1835, making him the first settler in the area, Kurtenbach said.

"Most people are not familiar with this area," said Kurtenbach. "It beautiful, with hills and rolling land and virgin timber. We'll have trails for biking, hiking, riding (all-terrain vehicles) and horses too. It's also close to Kankakee, Champaign and Joliet."

He also predicted a golf course could be developed if the development succeeds. Kurtenbach, a former teacher, returned to work the family farm with his father, Floyd, in 1980. While the farm has grown over the last 25 years — from 400 acres to more than 1,500 now — he has thought about developing part of the property for about 10 years.

"This land isn't very good for farming," said Kurtenbach of the proposed subdivision. "It's hilly and has a lot of clay. There is a glacial valley developed. It is a natural bowl. It's begging to have a lake developed around it."

It is the clay that is both a blessing and a curse to the pro-posed development. While it is good for holding the lake's water and allowing it to fill naturally through runoff, the tightly packed clay also prevents the development of a large-scale septic system.

Annexation to Chatsworth would allow the development to tap into the city's sewer system. If the city denies annexation, the project will be abandoned or scaled back to a few houses.

If the city approves annexation, the next step would be to take bore samples to see if the ground will hold water for the lake. If those turn out as he expects, then he will seek a state permit to build a 25-foot earthen dam.

"I hope we can move dirt by next summer," he said.

Kurtenbach and family members from the Chicago area have already begun marketing Oliver's Crossing to friends and local residents.

"I think there are lots of people interested in the project," said Kurtenbach. "If we had water in the lake, we'd have had people stopping by the next day" However, if the venture fails, Kurtenbach said he is content to have a lake for the family to use.

Article with Site Map

A June 28, 2006 article in the Fairbury Blade included a site map showing the new Lake Oliver and all the subdivision home building lots.

Family fulfilling dream for lake, housing development

A 200-acre Lake near Chatsworth, surrounded by a housing development, with boating and fishing? Yes, it, true. Oliver's Crossing is a proposed lake and home-site development near Chatsworth. The area has been annexed to the town for purposes of water and sewer treatment plants and now engineers are working to get permits to build a dam for the approximate 200-acre lake.

The Kurtenbach family, local area farmers for over four generations, is developing the scenic area and intend to offer home sites around it. The group of Kurtenbach brothers and sisters grew up within a mile of the site. Their parents, Floyd and Ida Kurtenbach, along with aunts Catherine and Rita Kurtenbach purchased some parcels of farm south of Chatsworth. Other tracts were later co-purchased by the rest of the family.

The timber area within the development has never been used for growing crops, thus many mature trees add to the beauty of the thousands of trees planted a few years ago. Trails are also popular with hikers as well as ATV riders.

The family members have used the area in the development for camping, hiking, horse back riding and riding all-terrain vehicles or snowmobiles. A pond at a nearby farm is a gathering place for many family get-togethers, especially for picnics and swimming.

The name of Oliver's Crossing came from the developers' great-great-great-grandfather, Franklin Oliver, who was the first European settler in the area. He was on his way to California when he stopped here and enjoyed the beauty of the area. Nearby was a village of nearly 600 Kickapoo Indians. Oliver befriended the Indians and lived peacefully with them. It is believed that one of his wives was from this tribe. After the Indians moved away, Oliver, as a surveyor settled land disputes as new inhabitants moved in to claim land. The developers hope that construction of approximately 300 home sites will begin in the spring of 2007.



Last Newspaper Article about Project

One of the last newspaper articles about this proposed project was published in the July 18, 2009 Pantagraph.

Housing developers looking for investors

Neighborhood surrounding man-made lake proposed

CHATSWORTH —Developers of Lake Oliver, a 1,000-acre housing development project south of Chatsworth, are looking for investors to help pay for engineering and marketing.

The project, called Oliver's Crossing when it was proposed in 2005, is expected to feature a 300 acre man-made lake and eventually have 950 homes, according to landowner and developer Jerry Kurtenbach, who serves

as chief financial officer and general counsel for the project.

Engineers are currently looking at the construction of a dam to create the lake, he said, adding he currently has 100 letters of interest from potential home buyers.

To pay for the next phases of the work, developers are working to raise \$1 million to \$2 million in investments. A new promotional DVD about the project is expected to be distributed to potential investors.

Town officials, who approve a tax increment financing district for the project last year, continue to hope the development comes to pass. In a tax increment financing district, a portion of property tax money generated by the development is diverted into a special fund to pay for infrastructure improvements and development assistance.

"It should be an improvement," Chatsworth Mayor Francis Haberkorn said. Kurtenbach said the Lake Oliver development is expected to take shape over the course of a decade. It would have a significant impact on the area economy, he added.

"There will be a material impact on a number of counties," he said. "One thing that we can offer is 250 good construction jobs that will last a decade!"

When the TIF district was proposed, Kurtenbach said the \$333 million development would bring in \$265 million more in taxes than the undeveloped land would generate over the 23 years of the TIF district's life. Deduct \$94 million the TIF district would pay out in incentives, and that would leave a net yield of \$171 million for the taxing bodies.

An average lot price in the development is \$155,000.

Due to the recent downturn in the economy and the home market, Kurtenbach said the developers are re-evaluating the layout, including the amount of lake shore allowed per lot and having condominiums in the mix.

"It'll work!" he said. "There is still a demand for this product!"



The Pantagraph/TONY SAPOCHETTI

Landowner and developer Ken Kurtenbach describes an area south of Chatsworth on Friday which may one day be covered in water for the Lake Oliver development.

2021 Status of Project

No construction has started on this proposed project.

CHAPTER 35

Unsolved Franklin Oliver Mysteries

Always Mysteries

Whenever historical research is performed, there are always mysteries that are encountered. As new data becomes available, sometimes these mysteries are eventually solved. In the case of Franklin Oliver, there are still many mysteries. This chapter will explain and examine those mysteries that are still outstanding in the year 2021.

Real Age of Franklin Oliver

Most existing publications state that he was born on April 8, 1787, in Bordentown, New Jersey, and he died on September 19, 1881. Using this data, Franklin Oliver was 94 years old when he died.

No newspaper documentation of his birth date is known to exist. Birth certificates were usually not required in the era he was born. There is also no known newspaper article announcing his birth.

In the 1800 U.S. Census, John Oliver, father of Franklin Oliver, is recorded as living in Burlington County, New Jersey. Unfortunately, it does not include the names of his wife or children. The 1810 Census shows the same data as the 1800 Census.

In the 1830 Census, Franklin Oliver is recorded as living in Niagara, New York. There is no date of birth or age for Franklin Oliver. In this Census, there were four children under age 20 and two adults between 20 and 49 years of age. This data matches the composition of this family in 1830.

The 1840 Census required no date of birth information. Franklin Oliver consistently reported his birth year as 1787 in the 1850, 1860, and 1870 U.S. Census.

The preponderance of this data indicates Franklin Oliver was born in the year 1787.

Did Benjamin Franklin give his portrait painted by Francis Hopkinson to his friend John Oliver, father of Franklin Oliver?

John Oliver (1733-1824) lived in Bordentown, New Jersey. Many historical documents validate that he lived at that location.

Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791) also lived in Bordentown, New Jersey. Hopkinson and Benjamin Franklin both signed the Declaration of Independence as representatives of New Jersey.

Hopkinson had many well-documented artistic skills, including writing poetry, writing music, and playing musical instruments. He also sketched the Great Seal of New Jersey and also drew the first United States flag.

The only document that supports the fact that Hopkinson was capable of painting a portrait was the article in the 1919 Pennsylvania Gazette. That article stated that Hopkinson painted a self-portrait and it hung in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Efforts to find this self-portrait were unsuccessful. If Hopkinson could paint a self-portrait, he was likely capable of painting a portrait of his friend Benjamin Franklin.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) lived in Philadelphia. Although there was a 27-year-old age difference between Benjamin Franklin and John Oliver, they could have been friends. Unfortunately, no documents could be found at this time documenting this friendship.

Francis Hopkinson was a close friend of Benjamin Franklin. Hopkinson was one of the four executors for Franklin's will and was bequeathed some musical instruments in the will.

Based upon these facts, the story about the Benjamin Franklin portrait may be true. However, no documents available at this time support this complete story.

How did Franklin Oliver learn the surveying trade, and did he work on Joseph Bonaparte's estate?

Joseph Bonaparte did live in Bordentown and made significant improvements to his estate. The years that Bonaparte lived in Bordentown line up with the same time that Franklin Oliver was a young man.

In that era, one probably learned the surveying trade by working as an apprentice to a surveyor. An apprentice could learn this trade in less than one year by working with a skilled surveyor.

At this time, it is unknown how Franklin Oliver learned the surveyor's trade. Although it is possible that Franklin Oliver worked for Joseph Bonaparte on his Bordentown estate, no written records support this theory.

Where did Franklin Oliver live between his War of 1812 service and when he moved to Illinois?

Documents exist validating that Franklin Oliver married Hannah Rockhill in 1818 in New Jersey. The 1878 Livingston County history book also documents that Franklin Oliver and his family moved to what is now the Chatsworth area in early 1832.

The 1878 history book also documents the Kickapoo tribe was located south of Fairbury from 1828 to 1830. In 1830, they moved

to a location south of present-day Chatsworth. They were forced to leave Illinois in September of 1832 after the Black Hawk war ended. Published accounts from the Valentine Darnall family also support the location of the Kickapoo in that era.

Some newspaper articles state that Franklin Oliver arrived in 1829, not 1832. These articles can not be correct since the Kickapoo did not move from Fairbury to the Chatsworth area until 1830. Judge McDowell (1818-1904) arrived in 1830 north of Fairbury, and he was aware of the location of the Kickapoo and Franklin Oliver. The McDowell family traded ammunition with the Kickapoo in exchange for door and window casings for their house. Judge McDowell was also interviewed extensively by the author of the 1878 history book. Judge McDowell was 12 years old when his family first arrived north of Fairbury. He was 60 years old when the author of the 1878 history book interviewed him.

When he was 81 years old in 1878, Franklin Oliver gave a confusing interview to the Daily Illinois State Register about where he lived before moving to Illinois. Oliver recounted that he moved to Illinois in May of 1826. Oliver's statement is in direct conflict with the information noted above.

Next, he recounted that he was born in 1780. However, per the data noted prior in this chapter, he was most likely born in 1787. Franklin Oliver consistently reported his birth year as 1787 in the 1850, 1860, and 1870 U.S. Census.

Franklin Oliver then recounted that he moved from New Jersey to New Orleans in 1819. He then said he moved to St. Louis in 1823 and then to Kaskaskia.

Franklin Oliver got married in 1818 in Bordentown. He and his wife had children in 1819, 1822, 1823, 1827, and 1831 in New Jersey.

The 1830 U.S. Census shows that the Franklin Oliver family was all living in the Bordentown area. Therefore, it is improbable he would leave a new wife with infant children while traveling to New Orleans, St. Louis, and Kaskaskia.

No data can be found which supports the story that Franklin Oliver told the reporter in Springfield.

Why did Franklin Oliver owe Mr. Tanner \$21,000 Back in New Jersey?

In an earlier chapter, the March of 1832 article noted that Franklin Oliver was a non-resident debtor, meaning he had left the Bordentown area. Oliver owed Mr. Tanner \$800, which is equivalent to \$21,000 in today's dollars.

No other information could be found about this case.

Where did Franklin Oliver get the cash to make his many land purchases in Illinois?

Although he worked as a surveyor in Illinois, that income would have been needed to support the needs of his wife and children. It is unlikely he could save enough money from his surveyor's income to make his land purchases.

Franklin Oliver took advantage of the military patent system and procured land at only about 12 cents on the dollar of the official government land price. However, even at this low price, it still took a lot of cash to make his land purchases. Oliver invested about \$86,000 in today's dollars to buy his 4,711 acres from the government.

Several possibilities exist for explaining where he got his cash. The first is that he received a significant inheritance from his father, who died in 1824. Since it was a large family of 11 children, it would seem unlikely that Franklin Oliver's portion of the estate would be significant. Per the last will and testament of John Oliver, he did own quite a bit of real estate in the Bordentown area.

Franklin Oliver apparently owed \$21,000 in today's dollars to Mr. Tanner back in New Jersey. Is it possible Oliver used some of this money to make his land purchases?

At this time, it is still a mystery of the sources of the cash Franklin Oliver used for his land purchases.

Who was Mary Wood that purchased land jointly with Franklin Oliver in 1839?

All of Franklin Oliver's land purchases from the federal government except one were in his name only. On November 1, 1839, Mary Wood and Franklin Oliver jointly bought 160 acres of land for cash in Livingston County. They purchased 160 acres in 026N – 008E section 28.

The first 80 acres was the northeast one-quarter of the west one-half of that section. The second 80 acres was the northwest one-quarter of the east one-half of that section.

A descendant wrote a handwritten log of Franklin Oliver's life. In that log, it states that Mrs. Wood came west with the Oliver family from Bordentown, New Jersey.

One possibility is that Mary Wood was a relative of either Franklin Oliver or his wife, Hannah Rockhill. Unfortunately, a genealogical search found no relative named Mary Wood. Unfortunately, the

name is so common that it makes it very difficult to research her life.

What is the rest of the story about the New Jersey Railroad using eminent domain to take land away from the Oliver family in 1831?

No other details could be found about this case. It must have really bothered Franklin Oliver because he returned to Bordentown 48 years later in 1879 with a lawyer to contest the transaction. Franklin Oliver was 92 years of age when he made this trip back to Bordentown.

Unexplained Causes of Death for First Wife

Franklin Oliver must have divorced his first wife, Hannah Rockhill, sometime before marrying his second wife, Sarah Wirtz, in 1848.

Just two years after he married his second wife, in 1850, his first wife, Hannah Rockhill, died at the age of 50. Her cause of death is unknown.

Unexplained Cause of Death for Second Wife

Franklin Oliver's second marriage to Sarah Wirtz only lasted two years. Oliver married his third wife, Amaretta Smith, in 1850.

Just five years later, Sarah Wirtz died at only 35 years of age. Her cause of death is unknown.

What was Franklin Oliver's farming business model?

Franklin Oliver purchased thousands of acres of farmland. Several sources, including the 1900 history book report that Franklin Oliver forbid logging of his land and prohibited crops grown on his lands.

Oliver is reported to have said he intended to return the ground the way he found it when he died.

Most landowners borrow money to buy their land. Each year they have to make enough money to pay on the loan and pay land property taxes. These landowners generate income by raising livestock or crops on their land.

From the historical records, it appears Franklin Oliver paid cash for his lands, so he owed no repayment of loans. He did, however, need to pay land property taxes each year.

Franklin Oliver could have periodically sold off some of his land holdings to generate income to provide for his family and pay property taxes on his land. This method could explain why his holdings of thousands of acres dwindled to almost nothing by the time he died.

Today, some people have no children, or they see no need to leave any of their estate to their family. Under this scenario, assets are gradually spent down, and the goal is to die with zero dollars in the bank. If this was Franklin Oliver's strategy, he achieved it.

In retrospect, Franklin Oliver could have cash rented out his land to local farmers. The cash rent he received could have provided for his family's needs and pay taxes. Under this scenario, he could have passed along his vast land holdings to his heirs.

At this time, Franklin Oliver's farming business strategy is not well documented anywhere.

Where was Franklin Oliver Buried in 1881?

His 1881 obituary says he was “placed in the silent tomb.” The exact meaning of this expression is not known today.

The 1944 obituary of Franklin Oliver’s grand-daughter, Mary Ellen Oliver-Kurtenbach, states that her grandfather was buried in the Chatsworth cemetery.

Since Franklin Oliver died with no cash to pay for funeral expenses, there are at least two possibilities of his burial location. He could have been interred in the ground somewhere on his farm at Oliver’s Grove. A second possibility is that he was buried in an unmarked grave in the Chatsworth cemetery.

At this time, Franklin Oliver’s burial location is not verified and remains a mystery.

What Happened to the Portrait of Benjamin Franklin?

The last recorded existence of this portrait was in the 1900 Livingston County history book. The family reported to the book editor that the picture was still in the family's possession on that date.

Several modern-day descendants have no idea of what happened to the Benjamin Franklin portrait. Internet searches were unable to find any reference to such a portrait painted or sketched by Francis Hopkinson.

The last will and testament of John Oliver, Franklin Oliver's father, was found on Ancestry.com. It was written in longhand and was three and a half pages long. There is no mention in John Oliver's will about the portrait of Benjamin Franklin. John Oliver did leave

the house he had purchased from Thomas Paine to one of his daughters.

A copy of the last will and testament for Benjamin Franklin was found. He did not leave a portrait painted by Francis Hopkinson to John Oliver. The only thing Franklin left to Francis Hopkinson was some musical instruments. Franklin did leave another portrait of himself painted by Mr. Martin to the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. Hopkinson was one of four men designated to be the executors of his will.

To determine what might have happened to the portrait, we can examine the Oliver family tree in 1900.

From Franklin Oliver's first marriage, James Oliver (1831-1920) and Edward Oliver (1819-1902) were still living. James was in California, and Edward was in Texas.

The only child from Franklin Oliver's second marriage was Caroline (1849-1936). She was married twice and had no children.

All three children from Franklin Oliver's third marriage were still living in 1900. John L. Oliver (1858-1916) lived in the Chatsworth area. Florence Oliver – Ross (1873-1943) was living in Indiana. Son Revilo Oliver (1853-1929) was living with his mother in Chatsworth in 1900.

Revilo's first marriage lasted only one week and produced no children. His second marriage to Flora Lang (1878-1960) created one child, Revilo P. Oliver (1908-1994), a Professor at the University of Illinois.

The most likely scenario is that the painting stayed with Oliver's third wife, Amaretta Smith until she died in 1908. Since Revilo was living with his mother, he likely got the picture.

Several newspaper articles indicate that Revilo's second wife, Flora Lang, was bankrupt after his death in 1929. Flora declared bankruptcy in 1931. She could have sold the painting to raise cash. If the sale was made to a private party, there would be no public record of the sale. If the painting was then resold again in a private party transaction, there would be no public record of the sale.

The location of the Benjamin Franklin portrait is still unknown at this date. If it still exists, it is likely worth over \$100,00 because both Benjamin Franklin and Francis Hopkinson were nationally famous early patriots.

Why Did Florence Oliver – Ross Board Her First Child with Her Mother and Revilo Oliver in Chatsworth?

According to the 1900 history book, young Gertie Ross lived with her grandmother, Amaretta Oliver, and her uncle, Revilo Oliver.

Florence Oliver was 15 years old when she married Thomas R. Ross (1866-1939). Gertie was the firstborn child of Florence and Thomas Ross. Florence was 16 years old when Gertie was born. They continued to have six more children after Gertie was born in 1889.

It seems unusual that Gertie lived with her grandmother and uncle while the other six children lived in Indiana with their parents.

The finding in the 1920 Illinois Supreme Court case of Revilo Oliver versus his sister Florence Ross has information about Gertie.

Revilo was able to make much money but unable to keep it. The record shows nothing unusual concerning the relations between John and his mother.

There appears to have been some trouble between Florence and her mother. Shortly after the birth of Gertrude, the first child of Florence, Gertrude came to live with her grandmother and her uncle Revilo. It appears that she was nurtured and raised in this home until she was twelve years of age, during which time a governess was provided for her, and she was also sent to school. There appears to have been some trouble between Florence and her mother about this time, and Gertrude was taken from her grandmother's home and was not permitted to return after that.

Maybe at just 16 years old, Florence was not old enough to care for an infant child. It remains unclear why young Gertie lived with her grandmother and uncle instead of her parents in Indiana.

Did Fairbury Judge Woodford G. McDowell (1818-1904) misbehave concerning his dealings with Chatsworth pioneer Franklin Oliver?

His fellow Judge Payson from Pontiac was found to have misbehaved by the Illinois Supreme Court in 1896 concerning how he acquired 1,200 acres of farmland from Franklin Oliver. Judge Payson paid only \$4,400 for 1,200 acres of land worth \$60,000.

No lawsuits could be found that were filed against Judge McDowell by the heirs of Franklin Oliver. No published accounts of improprieties by Judge McDowell could be found.

Alma Lewis James reported in her book that both Judge Payson's and Judge McDowell's reputations were tarnished badly because the public perceived they tried to take advantage of a senile Franklin Oliver. She asserts that both Judges had to leave their respective towns and move to Washington, D.C.

No historical information could be found supporting Alma Lewis James' claim that Judge McDowell's reputation was severely tarnished and that he had to leave Fairbury and go to Washington, DC. Judge McDowell's wife had relatives in the Washington, DC area. The Judge and his wife traveled back and forth from Fairbury to Washington, DC, many times before moving there.

What Is the Life Story of Maude Swope – Barlow?

The only two records that could be found about her life were her marriage certificate to Revilo Oliver Sr. and the Maude Oliver found in the 1910 U.S. Census, who was working as a masseuse in Chicago.

It is a mystery why she was not listed as living with John and Elmira Swope in either the 1870 or 1880 U.S. Census. No evidence could be found that she was friends or business partners with Mr. Willhite, the man that Revilo Oliver claimed defrauded him and stole his land.

Why Were So Many Rumors Started About Franklin Oliver?

Some of the rumors started about Franklin Oliver noted in Alma Lewis James' 1967 Fairbury history book included the items below.

1. Franklin Oliver married an Indian girl.
2. Franklin Oliver was one-quarter Indian.
3. Franklin Oliver murdered traveling pioneers who stayed the night at his home in Oliver's Grove. To hide the crime, he burned up their wagons and threw the steel wheels on a pile he kept in his back yard.
4. Oliver notched the ears of his children to mark them as his property.
5. People disappeared in the quicksand on his property.
6. Oliver miss-treated his wives.

There were several reasons these rumors were started. All of the early pioneer settlers in Livingston County were very afraid of the Kickapoo Indians and the Blackhawk War. The fact that Oliver did not leave the area temporarily like the other settlers probably generated the myths that he was one-quarter Indian, and he married an Indian girl.

Geographically, the land around Oliver's Grove was significantly different than the rest of the adjoining area. Even today, if one drives south of Chatsworth, at about three miles south of U.S. Route 24, it seems like you have entered another state. The land is hilly with ponds as compared to the dead flat prairie in adjoining areas. This unusual geography could explain why there were myths about people disappearing in the quicksand at Oliver's Grove.

Many historical writings claim that Oliver was an eccentric individual. One fact that supports this claim was he is the only known settler of Livingston County that did not farm his land. His business model had to seem eccentric to the rest of the farmers in the area.

Another example of his eccentric nature was naming his son Revilo for Oliver spelled backwards.

Oliver's physical appearance also was very unusual. He was quite a sight with his long flowing white hair and his beard. Because he looked different than the other area farmers, this probably contributed to rumors being started about him.

Many pioneer men had multiple marriages, but they were almost always the cause of the wife dying from disease or childbirth. Franklin Oliver was married three times, and none of them were a result of one of the wives dying while married to Oliver. It is also somewhat unusual for a 63-year-old man to marry a 17-year-old woman, which Oliver did when he married his third wife, Amaretta Smith.

CHAPTER 36

Franklin Oliver was the most colorful pioneer to settle in Livingston County. Between Franklin Oliver and his father, John Oliver, they experienced many different aspects of American history.

John Oliver served in the Revolutionary War and was a friend of Benjamin Franklin. He also lived in the same small town where another patriot, Francis Hopkinson, lived.

Although there is no solid documentation to support the family story about the Oliver family being given a portrait of Benjamin Franklin painted by Francis Hopkinson, there are also no facts that rule out this story.

Franklin Oliver served in the War of 1812. Somehow, he learned the trade of surveying. Although no solid documentation supports his story that he worked for Joseph Bonaparte on his Bordentown estate, there are no known facts that contradict this possibility.

Franklin Oliver was able to gain the trust of the Kickapoo Indians, and he lived among them for about nine months. Then, in September of 1832, the Kickapoo were forced to leave the state of Illinois.

Franklin Oliver surveyed the prairies in Livingston County and saw it grow from a swamp with virgin prairie to some of the most productive lands on the planet.

Franklin Oliver was married three times and had nine children. Today, his many descendants have spread around the United States.

Many mysteries still surround the details of the life of Franklin Oliver. However, as more historical information becomes available, future historians will solve many of these mysteries.

It is hoped this book helps people understand the critical role that Franklin Oliver played in the development of Livingston County.

References

All references used in this story were identified at the point they were used in the story.

Recommended Reading

Stuffed Clubs and Antimacassars by Alma Lewis James.

Websites

Echoes Museum, Fairbury, Illinois

Other Sources of Information

None

-

Author Spotlight



Dale C. Maley

One of Dale's hobbies is history, including the history of Fairbury, Illinois. Dale has written over 20 books on Fairbury and Livingston County history. He has also written over 200 history stories for the Fairbury Blade newspaper. He has given many lectures to local Fairbury community groups about the history of Fairbury. Dale is President of the Livingston County Historical Society and is Vice-President of the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Both Dale and his wife are 5th generation citizens of Fairbury.

[Also by Dale C. Maley](#)

Livingston County History Books

- Coal Mining in Fairbury, Illinois
- Fairbury History Stories: Volume One
- Fairbury, Illinois Book Authors
- Fairbury, Illinois in 1888
- Fairbury, Illinois in the Civil War
- Fairbury, Illinois and the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition
- Fairbury, Illinois, from Prehistoric Times to Modern Times
- Fairbury, Illinois in the World Wars
- History of Murders Committed in Fairbury, Illinois
- Honeggers of Fairbury, Illinois
- Livingston County Historical Society: It's Beginning and Some Later Updates
- The Founding of Fairbury, Illinois
- The Goudy Brothers of Fairbury, Illinois
- The Great Chatsworth Train Wreck of 1887
- The Kring Family of Fairbury, Illinois

- The McDowell Family of Fairbury, Illinois
- Walton Bros. Of Fairbury, Illinois
- William T. Stackpole of Fairbury, Illinois
- William T. Stackpole's 1849 Journey from Illinois to the California Gold Fields